

Struggle, Battle, Clash

by Richard Jochum at the Brooklyn Art Cluster Gallery, February 3 - 24, 2018

Curated by Hansi Liao



Richard Jochum: *Struggle, Battle, Clash*, an exhibition surveying the artist's recent video installations and participatory projects, poses the question of struggle in a world of ubiquitous social media, overwhelming information and attention overkill. How do we best present ourselves? How do we catch each other's attention? How do we make ourselves look good? What do we do with the awkward in us and the anger that boils up?

The centerpiece of the show, *Tug of War*, is a multiple channel video projection showing a boy and a girl struggling to pull on the same rope from either side. Jochum first created a two-channel prototype, where the artist seemed to be on both sides of the rope. While this piece, like the prototype, represents a self that is forcefully conflicted, Jochum's new adaptation helps us empathize with each other's struggles and create companionship. Upon close observation, one discovers that the two performers pulling the rope are actually two pairs of identical twins. *Tug of War* was inspired by Jochum's experience sitting in a ski lift following his parents. He was taken by the fact that he could see his parents' backs and they could not. After pondering this for a while, he realized that while they could not see their backs, he could not see his own either. He was struck by that realization and thought one day he would create a piece about it. "In some way, art making is precisely that: the ability to create works that allow us to look at our own backs. Maybe this is why I am so upset about the narcissism of our times: we are only looking at our fronts." Another work on view, *Halt II*, which shows the artist sawing the tree branch he sits on until it breaks and unceremoniously drops him to the ground, uses humor to deal with the struggles of a narcissistic self.

Jochum's art practice often explores people's mentality by seeking answers from his audience. His most recent participatory work, *Survey*, is a political statement that examines the post-election emotional undercurrent and struggle. Initially conceived as a silkscreen print in poster size, it then developed into a mail art project inviting participants to respond to the questionnaire. Jochum believes in the power of art rather than in decoration, as his art continually aims to find new imagery for the time we live in, and for the conditions and issues we deal with: existentially, politically, physically, and globally.

Richard Jochum is a conceptual artist working in a broad variety of media with a strong focus on video, interactive installation, performance, and photography. He received his PhD from the University of Vienna (1997) and an MFA in sculpture and media art from the University of Applied Arts in Vienna (2001). Richard's art practice is accompanied by publications and research in the field of cultural theory, new media, and contemporary art and he has been awarded several grants and prizes. One of his latest large scale art installations has been a 30,000 square feet collaborative video mapping project onto the Manhattan Bridge.