

Everything is Connected: Art and Conspiracy

by Douglas Eklund and Ian Alteveer. Yale University Press, October 2018. 196 p. ill. ISBN 9781588396594 (h/c), \$50.00.

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Published in conjunction with the 2018 exhibition at the Met Breuer, this book, by curators Douglas Eklund and Ian Alteveer, presents substantive essays linking the works in the exhibition as well as contributions placing conspiracy “paranoia” in historical context. It opens with “Knitting the Monster’s Socks,” by the novelist Jonathan Lethem, who deftly introduces the concerns and themes of the book in two brief pages.

The thirty-some artists selected are from the postwar period, stopping just before the 2016 U.S. presidential election. All but five of the artists chosen are from the United States and all are over the age of forty.

Eklund and Alteveer identify two dynamic, intersecting approaches. The first includes artists who engage in painstaking research

and seek to expose or document through their work. The second is the depiction of the endlessly intricate, seemingly obsessive nature of conspiracy. The selected artists often mimic or employ visual strategies or pseudo-journalistic methods characteristic of conspiracy theorists, resulting in works that may be dreamlike or suggest the rabbit hole world of conspiracies, yet reveal important truths. Artist Mike Kelley, in a 1991 interview, suggested conspiracy as a subject and in 2010 compiled a list of artists for inclusion in a proposed show, all of whom made the final cut. Eklund and Alteveer subsequently added more artists, including Lutz Bacher, Sarah Charlesworth, Wayne Gonzales, Rachel Harrison, Jenny Holzer, Sarah Anne Johnson, Peter Nagy, Tony Oursler, Raymond Pettibon, Jim Shaw, and Sue Williams.

In addition to the color illustrations offered throughout the text, color plates are provided at the end of each chapter. The illustrations are effectively chosen and clear - important given that so much of the art utilizes text. In the case of Mark Lombardi, the book's designers found a solution by using the book's endpapers for a close-up of one of Lombardi's complex, deeply researched webs. The back matter includes a list of works in the exhibition, chapter notes, a selected bibliography, and an index.

The "Conspiracy in Context" section consists of three essays with historical perspective on the proliferation and mainstream acceptance of conspiracy theories, including events such the assassination of JFK, Watergate, and 9/11. The dynamics of conspiracy theory, hate groups and anti-Semitism are well summarized in a chapter by artist John Miller, whose art is featured in the book. Interestingly, Michael Barkun's *Religion and the Racist Right* is quoted more than once, but Barkun's book on conspiracy theory is not mentioned. Nevertheless, how diverse disciplines address both art and conspiracy is covered throughout the book, making it a useful purchase for academic libraries.