

KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

this is tomorrow

Christopher Chiappa: LIVESTRONG

Arthur Bravo

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Exhibition view of Christopher Chiappa, "LIVESTRONG", 2015 – 2016 Kate Werble Gallery, New York

For his third exhibition at Kate Werble Gallery, titled 'LIVESTRONG,' the New York City-based artist Christopher Chiappa has prepared and assembled 7,000 unique plaster-based sculptures of sunny side up-style fried eggs, and installed them throughout the gallery's show spaces, offices, and even its interior structure, so as to mimic or evoke an infestation. The result (which is undeniably in the vein of what Chiappa has come to be known for) presents a profoundly ordinary object, in this case an item of common food, taken out of its traditional context, multiplied beyond what is considered rational, and arranged within an exhibition space. The work inevitably becomes rich in interpretive power, both in its oddity and in its curiously paradoxical minimalism.

From the beginning of his exhibiting career in the late 1990s, Chiappa's work has been inspired by material culture and the associated imagery and aesthetics of everyday life. Its production, however, is concerned with traditional craftsmanship and the negotiation of direct representation, with a dark sense of humour surrounding 'ordinary-ness' often implied.

Considering the subject matter and processes with which Chiappa is concerned, influences such as Abstract Expressionism, Pop Art, and the sculptor Claes Oldenburg become apparent, and it wouldn't be difficult to see how these heavyweights of American modern art may have informed 'LIVESTRONG.' When inspected closely and individually, each unique egg is not necessarily adhering closely to reality, in fact,

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they straddle the line between the 'real' and the evocation of a shiny, mass-produced aesthetic that Pop Art attempted at and played with, and a larger-than-life, almost cartoonish character central to Oldenburg's iconic works. That each egg is unique from the other, but specifically through the means of craft, is what ultimately gives them an organic feel, though in an interestingly – and rewardingly (for the viewer) - unexpected way.

But, apart from its possible influences, 'LIVESTRONG' has much to offer besides. The 'infestation' of eggs, as mentioned, covers not only the gallery's exhibitions spaces proper, but also its small offices, and any other spaces not traditionally part of the 'exhibition' experience – the eggs can also be found on the windowsills, and intruding into the interiors bared in the ceilings above. When physically encountered, the installation provides an immersive experience, as it is not something that can be viewed from a distance or logically walked around, it surrounds the viewer – albeit passively.

For all the negative and sinister connotations of an 'infestation', the nature of the installation also elicits a humorous reaction. It is a domestically-inclined mess. Some kind of cognitive confusion is effectively evoked by the particularities and contingencies expected to be involved with, and ultimately subverted, by Chiappa's playful expansions on the concepts of the ordinary and everyday, the domestic, food, eggs, exhibition spaces, order and chaos, patterns and arrangements, symbolism and analogies, and more. Furthermore, the work can be seen as both minimalistic and not, by way of the egg's simple and abstract aesthetic, and the physical substance of the exhibition's mass replication. Ultimately, it is through its innate and potent paradoxes and its ability to confound expectations and meanings that 'LIVESTRONG' succeeds.