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TONY OURSLER
Lehmann Maupin, New York
By Joyce Korotkin

Documenting the history of technology as well as deconstructing the nature of the illusions he creates with it, Tony Oursler's drawings read like a diary of collected thoughts. Originating from the artist's research for his surreal sculptural installations, they begin with the "Mimetic" series—images of projectors and cameras, in colors like lime green and shocking pink, that progress into analyses of the components of perceptual illusions and their transmitters. Through a focus on the schematics of technology, the artist integrates text and code into works like *Blue Brain*, in which data emits from the brain, itself both a transmitter and receiver. Metaphysical inquiries are explored in images of objects that function as media for mimesis, such as *Bad Doll* or a ventriloquist's dummy.

Spanning a range from figurative to abstract and expressionist to boldly graphic, the works coalesce through subject matter into a cohesive thesis, one that breaks down process to see how things work, as in the silhouetted antennas of *Good Job* or the static of *Live Broadcast*. *Pattern America* incorporates all of Oursler's concerns, with its encoded map, superimposed text regarding wavelengths, and blue-faced wizard in crimson robes—perhaps the artist's alter ego? Like a mischievous Wizard of Oz, Oursler pulls the curtain of his own illusions aside as if to say, "See? It's nothing but smoke and mirrors."

But is it? As Picasso once articulated, art is a lie that tells the truth. Oursler leaves truth—such as video projectors—in full view. The equipment belies the illusions it creates. Meaning lies somewhere between process and magical image. Oursler's real magic, however, lies in transcendent results rather than the sorcery of his means. His installations suspend the viewer between awe inspired by cutting-edge technologies and expressive angst. In arcane illusions and in his trademark parhos, Oursler makes viewers laugh and cry in the same gasp of amazement while leading them straight into the dark heart of human fragility. Contrasting illusions with truth, the artist lays bare his ruminations on technology, adding yet another layer of complexity to his oeuvre.