William J. O’Brien

May 15 – June 26, 2011

Opening Reception: May 15, 6:00-7:00pm

Featuring a talk with the artist from 6:00-6:30 pm

A Symptom Called Joy

In 1939, Freud wrote Reminiscences, Reparation and Working Through. It was the second in a series of papers about the techniques of psychoanalysis. Although Freud had long since abandoned hypnosis in favor of free association, he had yet to elaborate on the latter method's virtues and challenges as a means of accessing the unconscious. Unconscious ideas, free associ- ation took place while the patient was in a conscious state. It allowed the unconscious to speak through the conscious mind thereby registering the unconscious as an ever-present force. Using “thought-connection,” free associ- ation illustrated that repressed memories are “un-thought” about, which means they are fully available and at work in the unconscious. Freud was adamant that psychological illnesses “do not treat as events of the past, but as a present force.”

Well before Reminiscences achieves representation in our conscious mind, its manifestations were in action. These actions will be repeated, and their repetition becomes a substitute for remembering. Remembrance will also occur in excess, becoming symptomatic of resistance to treatment. In no small measure, Remembrance, Reparation and Working Through is Freud’s call for patience since the analyst’s goal is to convert the symptom into material that is accessible to the unconscious.

“Marriage is a state of unconsciousness,” Freud wrote. “The protection of unconsciousness is the unconscious.” With the advent of modernism whose dissolution of traditional aesthetic values, to state it in crude terms, bears a resemblance to the hordes of ceramic artists that are currently in the art world. It is not surprising that for want of a better term are best described as “objet d’art.”

The symptom ofJoy is usually described as “release from distress” in response to a perceived improvement in one’s life. It is considered an “adaptation response,” a natural reaction to a perceived threat or stressor. In the context of art, the concept of Joy is often used to describe a feeling of satisfaction or pleasure that arises from the aesthetic experience of viewing art. It is a subjective experience that varies from person to person, and can be influenced by a variety of factors, including the aesthetic qualities of the artwork, the viewer’s personal history, and their cultural background.

The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, 5711 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, IL 60637

Open to the public

Exhibition Hours:
Monday – Friday: 10 am - 5 pm
Saturday: 11 am - 5 pm
Sunday: 1 pm - 5 pm

Closed: July 4, 2011

Free admission

Gallery Walk-Through
Saturday, May 21, 10 am – 11 am

Object Matter of American Literature

For More Information, Visit:
www.arts.uchicago.edu

Related Events

Opening Reception
Sunday, May 15, 6:00 – 7:00 pm

Featuring a talk with the artist from 6:00-6:30 pm at Kent Hall Room 107

Opening Reception
Sunday, May 15, 7:00 – 8:00 pm

Featuring a talk with the artist from 7:00-7:30 pm at Kent Hall Room 107

Opening Reception
Sunday, May 15, 8:30 – 9:30 pm

Featuring a talk with the artist from 8:30-8:30 pm at Kent Hall Room 107

GALLERY WALK-THROUGH
Saturday, May 21, 10 am – 11 am

Bill Brown, Curator

William J. O’Brien: A Symptom Called Joy

Featuring a talk with the artist from 6:00-6:30 pm at Kent Hall Room 107

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