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Zitrone

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Zitrone

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Art

by

Chase Young
Arizona State University
Bachelor of Fine Art in Sculpture, 2016

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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Abstract:

The purpose of this thesis paper is to describe the elements and narrative associated with the exhibition, *Zitrone*, as well as the conceptual and theoretical ideas influencing the work. The exhibition is centered around an invented singular historical object in the form of a vehicle, and a museum display of artifacts, documents, and recreations intended to validate the existence of the central subject. Drawing on the work of artists Marcel Broodthaers, Damien Hirst, and David Wilson in conjunction with theoretical writings of Dave Hickey and Lewis Hyde, the exhibition seeks to address the perception and presentation of history as absolute truth versus subjective interpretation of events. Using the methods and tropes of display associated with the museum and the archiving and dissemination of truth, the project provokes thought into both the possibility or impossibility of historical accuracy and the accountability of the museum in that discourse.

Table of Contents:

Background.....	Pg. 1
Influences.....	Pg. 4
Description of Artworks and Formal Analysis.....	Pg.7
Conceptual Framework.....	Pg. 12
Sources.....	Pg. 17
Figures.....	Pg. 18

Background:

There are several artworks that I have constructed in the lead up to this exhibition that have had a profound impact and effect on the way that I think and make and have had a crucial impact on the course of this thesis. While the formal and conceptual ties may seem loose at first, each progressive work represents a stepping stone to this moment. Whether through material usage, constructed content, or conceptual exploration these works provide direct links in artistic process to the culmination of *Zitrone*.

Failure of Redundancy is a work that was created as a series of quick reactionary sculptures in response to impulsive ideas as a way to search out my artistic drive and voice. It consists of four stock rat traps, all joined to each other at miters, forming an intersection where all of the traps converge and close in on the same central point. The impetus for the piece was a tile in the board game “Life” which states that you have built a better mousetrap and earned a certain amount of money due to the feat. I set out to realize this “better mousetrap” through means of multiplicity following the thought process that if one is good, than four is better. It was not until the project was complete that I realized the fatal flaw in this train of thought which is that if all of the traps are tripped simultaneously they have the potential to bind and cancel each other out completely.

It is this sort of abrupt reactionary thinking that *Zitrone* capitalizes on. The idea that a problem; be it mechanical, social, or political; can be solved using the same method as the insufficient original is at the core of this thesis and was illuminated through this hasty fix. The idea of insufficient patches to problems rather than a complete re-working from a new or progressive angle is at the heart of this thesis project, and while this idea was not completely evident when *Failure of Redundancy* was created the idea reemerged in a later work that solidified its importance to my current practice.

One of the most critically important methodologies employed in the creation of the *Zitrone* exhibition is the exhaustive and somewhat absurd attention to detail surrounding a

singular, seemingly insignificant object. It is this inordinate amount of time and devotion that keeps the viewers' engagement, constantly questioning the validity of the gesture and the authenticity of the object.

My first project that brought this way of working to light was titled *The Most Perfect 2x4*. The idea came from an extremely nice 2x4 that had been kept for years by a faculty member awaiting a project that was worthy of its perfection. Initially the project consisted of just a high quality case to protect the piece of lumber, but i soon found that the narrative of its perfection could be developed further to reinforce the idea. The final sculpture consisted of a custom case of walnut, maple, and mahogany lined with purple velvet that resembled both a display case and a coffin. The 2x4 was displayed in the case for a one night only exhibition/viewing after which it was incinerated so that it would never be used for anything that was below its perfection. The final display of the project took the form of an arrangement of artifacts including the case that was mounted on the wall like a fireplace mantle, upon which was an urn with the ashes of the 2x4 and a picture frame with several images from the viewing. Below the mantle was a monitor playing a recording of the cremation contributing to the overall aesthetic appearance of a domestic fireplace mantle scene.

It was the detail with which the project was created that required more than just passing attention from the viewer of *The Most Perfect 2x4*. The hand crafted, dovetail keyed display case, in conjunction with the segmented turned urn, and the effort of staging a viewing demanded extended consideration as to the validity of the object of the narrative as well as the genuine belief of the creator of the work. Eventually this approach of building up infrastructure around an object to develop a richer narrative would lead to this thesis project in which a multitude of artifacts, documents and exhibits prop up the validity of the central entity.

The last work that solidified the trajectory of this thesis project and incorporated lessons learned from both *Failure of Redundancy*, and *The Most Perfect 2x4* was a project entitled *Building Interventions*. This project consisted of several different works positioned throughout

the University of Arkansas Sculpture building that exploited peculiarities inherent in the building's construction. Ranging from a cell phone that was plugged into an outlet permanently trapped within a wall to a skylight fixture that bends light around poorly planned air conditioning ducting, the works supported each other in questioning the validity of the surrounding environment and the turbulent history of design and construction embedded in its short existence.

One piece in particular brought together the idea of patches to problems as opposed to actual fixes within the exhaustive interaction with the subject. Titled *Manufactured Provisional*, this work consisted of a door stop solution based on a provisional design that the original builders used. By copying the concept of two pieces of wood wedged under the door, but accurately CNC routing them and attaching to plasma cut steel powder coated boxes with laser cut safety signs the "solution" was an overwrought patch that while effective in one sense was cumbersome and ultimately doomed. The work was manufactured and installed (adjacent to ineffective kick down door stops provided by the contractor as a patch for defective door struts) on every door on the lower level of the building forcing the viewer to reevaluate the necessity and validity of the object while also highlighting the failure of the original construction. These two elements, insufficient patches as solutions, and detailed infrastructure propping up simple ideas form the backbone of *Zitrone* and provide opportunities for communication through the body of work.

While the aforementioned works that have impacted the conceptual underpinnings of this thesis work have developed fairly recently, the material and aesthetic background of the work has been a long time in development, longer even than my participation in the fine art realm. The use of a modified Volkswagen bus as the medium of expressing complications of historical presentation is no accident. I have had an intense fascination with vintage Volkswagens since a chance encounter I had with a magazine devoted exclusively to them when I was fourteen years old. I had been drawn toward car culture since a young age, perhaps

due to the expected stereotypes of masculinity in the 80's or the prevalence of custom car culture in the southwest with the intersection of hot rod culture, land speed racing, and lowrider lifestyle so pervasive throughout Arizona, Utah, and Southern California. Having initially been mesmerized by the glitz and shine of big buck hot rod builds I had never given a second thought to the goofy, dilapidated slug bugs that I saw on the roads. Why should something so slow and rusty garner any attention amongst the overly saturated rods of the 90s? The encounter with the Volkswagen magazine changed my perception and understanding of automotive aesthetic (and future artistic aesthetic as well). Here was a group of people devoting copious amounts of time, energy, love and income to an inherently unattractive vehicle. Rather than glorifying vehicles that were already accepted as beautiful and valuable, and hot rodding inherently powerful big block V8 engines, these people were taking one of the cheapest vehicles available, giving them the same adornment as the collector cars and building wheel standing engines out of what was originally one of the weakest engines put into a modern vehicle. By pouring all of their resources into something that seemed wholly undeserving, these counter culturalists forced me and the rest of car culture to seriously consider their product. This approach of glorifying the seemingly undeserving object through meticulous and devoted effort has become one of the most important aspects of my artistic practice and is a key component in the formation of *Zitrone*.

Influences:

There are a number of artists that have had a direct impact on the work that is presented in *Zitrone*. While there are distinct differences in approach and content between my work and those artists that I define as influences, there is a shared interest in the object, its presentation, interpretation, and the history that is presented in conjunction with it. I think it is no coincidence that this interest has garnered the thoughts and work of a multitude of artists in historical and recent time and is indicative of a shared public concern with source validity and presentation of truth.

One of the earlier artists to take on this topic and task that has had a profound effect on *Zitrone* is Belgian artist Marcel Broodthaers. Having begun his career in art as a poet with marginal success, Broodthaers turned his attention to visual art in 1963 and began constructing art objects which often included text. However it is the project that he began in 1968 that has had a profound impact on my current work. Stemming from a need for more seating during a meeting of a group of artists protesting the power structures of the art industry, Marcel filled his house with empty crates from an art removals company. From this instance was born the fictitious *Museum of Modern Art Department of Eagles*, an outlet for mining the presentation of historic truth and the infrastructure surrounding that endeavor from financial to advertising and even a cinema section.

Through constructing a portion of a museum and engaging with the tropes of its structure Broodthaers forced the viewer to more closely consider the assembly and dissemination of truth that underpins the museum's purpose. In a similar vein *Zitrone* incorporates museum displays, textual documents, and artifacts to present a convoluted history to the audience and prompts an exploration into truth versus lie that circles back to a questioning of the display of fact and our collective trust of those displays.

It is often the case that rather than choosing our influences, our influences choose us, even seemingly against our own will. Such is the case with the influence that Damien Hirst has had on me. I have a disinterest in and a dislike for the overdramatic opulence of Hirst's personality and much of his work. This feeling extends to the execution of his recent work at the Venice Biennale in 2017 in the Punta Della Dogana. While the physical presentation of the work in the show *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* is typical over the top Damien Hirst with three story tall cast figures and unknown millions of dollars worth of gold, the concept of the work has had a profound impact on my current work.

By inventing a historical shipwreck, complete with a narrative of empires and other key figures, and producing artifacts that authenticate the event with deterioration and aquatic

growth, Hirst buoys the falsity that he is pedaling. Furthermore, the use of documents of authentication and other tropes of museum presentation serve to confirm that what the viewer is experiencing is truth. The most impactful element of the work for me however was the documentary that was produced in conjunction with the project. Damien takes the hoax one step further by creating a documentary detailing the discovery of the vessel complete with all of the clichés of reality tv-esque excitement that we expect in the early 21st century combined with questionable science – that the recreation of an entire vessel can be generated from a fragment of a single nail.

The influence of Damien Hirst's work on *Zitrone* is quite evident in elements such as recreations of original elements from unreliable evidence and original artifacts preserved and protected behind glass; however, *Zitrone* deviates from Hirst's methods in key ways. *Zitrone* does not reveal itself or its falsity. *Treasures from the Wreck of the Unbelievable* ends with “salvaged” artworks with kitschy pop origins such as Optimus Prime from the popular *Transformers* franchise, and the documentary leaves you at the end with an image of Mickey Mouse on the seafloor leaving the entire archeological project to be utterly dismissed. *Zitrone* however begins with truths, actual objects, and articles and manipulates them in order to authenticate the narrative yet never reveals what is historically legitimate. In this way the exhibition retains its life even after the audience has left the exhibition.

Further influence for *Zitrone* and the direction that my artistic practice has taken is that of David Wilson and the *Museum of Jurassic Technology*. By taking the idea of museum display as creative material to the extent of actually owning and running a museum of his own, Wilson has pushed the potential of institutional infrastructure as artistic medium. The museum which admittedly confesses its falsity from the start with its title, takes authentic artifacts and adds invented and contrived elements in order to disorient the viewer from the truth.

It is David Wilson's commitment to the performance of curator however that has had the biggest impact on me and has translated to the work in *Zitrone*. Wilson never breaks character

in the presentation of the museum that he owns. When questioned he has a story and history for every object and display in the museum no matter how obviously false. To this end Wilson is always the curator, assembling the displays and making decisions on content that will be included in the exhibitions but never admitting to any creation or fabrication of content. It is this commitment to character that make the museum endure. Once, the “trick” is discovered or revealed it would be easy to dismiss, if it weren't for the persistence of the author. That persistence forces the audience to consider that there is more than the trick, that there is something to explore in the falsity that is presented so familiarly and in such a trustworthy manner.

With *Zitrone* I take a similar stance as artist curator, assembling and presenting an authentic history as art practice. As with the *Museum of Jurassic Technology*, *Zitrone* never divulges its falsity. From the beginning the viewer is left with the task of parsing truth from fiction with no information or hint from the artist to guide that endeavor. This commitment to the narrative presented encourages contemplation on the reasoning and takeaway for the audience.

Beyond the *Zitrone* thesis, a grant has been secured to show the vehicle in a sort of traveling exhibition on the back of a U-Haul trailer, stopping at various rest stops and roadside attractions. This extension of the project will serve to engage a different audience in a different environment where the interaction with art is unexpected as opposed to the gallery experience. The role I play in this portion of the project will change to a transporter with little knowledge of the vehicle's history, to allow the audience to invent its own narrative.

Description of Artworks and Formal Analysis:

Zitrone is divided into two key components: The Mid-Cab vehicle (the centerpiece of the exhibition), and a collection of various artifacts, documents, recreations, and information panels designed to authenticate and present the history of the vehicle.

The gallery that the exhibition is presented in is about thirty-four feet long by twenty feet wide. The front of the gallery which includes the entrance is one of the long walls and is made up almost entirely of glass. The gallery is a double height space with a mezzanine above the entrance to the gallery. The vehicle will be positioned roughly in the middle of the room running long ways and offset towards the glass wall, and the wall opposite of the entrance (fig.1). This positioning leaves room and provides a sight line to the back wall of the gallery which will contain the bulk of the historical content for the exhibition. Additionally positioning the vehicle close to the glass creates a sort of vitrine effect, especially when the gallery is not open, emphasizing the authenticity and rarity of the artifact, and the importance of protecting and preserving it, two of the main goals of the museum establishment.

Unity and Continuity are key formal principles considered in the organizational layout of the exhibition. It is imperative that the various elements all work together to read as one consistent exhibition rather than individual independent works of art in order to prevent confusion and also to boost believability in the history that is being presented. One way this continuity is achieved is through use of the formal principle of repetition. All of the museum cases are identical in their construction which unifies them as one body even though the contents vary (fig. 2). The theme of the show is also repeated through each individual work. Either through text or imagery (and oftentimes both) the support material always points back to the Mid-Cab vehicle on central display.

The Mid-Cab model is a non-existent variant of Volkswagen Transporter line. Starting with an authentic and original 1974 VW transporter the vehicle has been extensively modified and transformed into a completely new model. The center section of the roof was first cut loose and removed. After welding the doors shut the front cab section (including the windshield, but excluding the nose section) of the transporter was cut out, and positioned roughly half way back in the vehicle where a cavity was previously cut out. The cab in its new position was carefully grafted together through MIG welding with the rear section. The opening left by the removal was

filled with sheet metal cut out for relocation of the cab, and new bed rails were made for the sides. Next the front of the car was cut and hinged creating a nose gate for loading and unloading the vehicle. The final fabrication process involved completely fabricating from scratch a truck bed interior and cab front, completing the transformation of the Volkswagen bus into the Mid-Cab: essentially a truck with the bed in the front, and the cab just forward of the rear wheels.

The donor vehicle for the Mid-Cab came with a very specific aesthetic. It had a patina that was unique to its use and experience over the 45 plus years of existence. The reconfigured vehicle with all of the cutting, welding, and splicing obviously interfere with that historical patina. After the necessary repainting, the finish of the truck has been restored to the authentic decay through careful sanding denting and rusting as much as possible, in an attempt portray authenticity to the new configuration (fig. 3). The interior as well has been refinished to be as believable as possible.

The support material that comprises the rest of the exhibition is organized chronologically in order to create a logical flow through the exhibition in a clockwise motion around the vehicle centerpiece. The wall just inside the entrance to the gallery displays the Zitron title of the exhibition in Wolfsburg font, the font used for the original Volkswagen script logo, as well as a broadside introducing the exhibition (fig. 6). Transitioning to the back wall is a sixteen foot long timeline CNC routed from medium density fiberboard applied to the wall (fig. 7). This timeline recounts the critical points in the history of the Mid-Cab model. It begins with the historical events that created the need for the reconfiguration of the transporter “1963 - Announcement of tightened safety standards over the next 5 years in U.S. dictating, among other things, driver location, and fuel efficiency effect VW Transporter desirability.” Transitioning through the creation and promotion of the model and ending with poor customer reception and its ultimate demise in an entry reading “Early 1975 - Rudolf Leiding voluntarily resigns from Volkswagen amid downward spiraling sales.” The timeline also incorporates authentic

photography and imagery related to the events cited such as photos from 1973 Oil crisis, and Rudolf Leiding, Volkswagen's CEO at the time the model was introduced.

Color is one element that is crucial to the unification of the works in the exhibition. The original vehicle was a heavily oxidized red and I have stayed true to that authenticity even after its conversion. The red color is carried throughout the exhibition such as with the interior of the display cabinets in order to further connect the support material to the vehicle. As the word "Zitrone" means lemon in German, yellow also became an important unifying color to the exhibition. All of the wall mounted elements including the title, timeline, and advertisements are highlighted by a yellow stripe, angled forward at the title and backward at the end. This stripe employs the power of line in both unifying the works, and reinforcing the critical directional flow of the exhibition while also referencing the aesthetic of racing stripes. Additionally, Black is used to ground the title and descriptive text and as the third color, in addition to red and yellow, of the German flag, rounds out a continuity of theme.

Below and adjacent to the timeline are several museum cases presenting historical artifacts and recreations relating to the vehicle and timeline. The cases have a supporting base and a glass window on the top angled slightly toward the viewer. The items displayed inside are lit with led lights, and have a visible cylinder lock demonstrating the importance of securing the historical artifacts contained.

The first case contains an original *Car and Driver* magazine from 1974 which is opened to a page with a brief fabricated review of Volkswagen's announcement of the new Mid-Cab model (fig. 8). The magazine is also accompanied by a textual description of the review and how it set up the public response to the vehicle.

Moving across the timeline the viewer next comes to a case that has no glass top and exhibits a used copy of John Muir's iconic car manual "How to Keep your Volkswagen Alive" (fig. 9). The manual is exposed for the viewer to thumb through but is opened to a page that has a manipulated Peter Aschwanden illustration of the Mid-Cab titled "Ode to the Barge."

The last museum case that the audience comes to contains a 3D re-creation of the supposed original Mid-Cab badge (fig. 11) as well as a fuzzy fabricated photograph of an original badge on a vehicle from the 70s (fig. 10). There is also a short textual description of the process of recreating the badge. Next to the badge is an interactive station with paper, crayons, and a shallow relief of the badge where people can make a rubbing of the badge to take home, employing a common museum strategy to slow down the viewer and also engage a younger audience, a concern that is increasingly visible in today's museums.

Moving clockwise to the west wall there are three fake wall-mounted advertisements for the Mid-Cab from the era (fig. 12). These ads are in the tradition of the iconic VW ads of the 60s and 70s. The first ad portrays a straight on shot of the rear end of a Volkswagen transporter with the tagline “You Won’t Believe What We’ve Done To The Front” the subtext goes on to describe the VW Mid-Cab and the revolutionary changes making it safer and more efficient.

The second advertisement that the viewer encounters has an image of the Plattenwagen, a purpose built vehicle made by Volkswagen to transport parts around the factory and never sold to the public. The Plattenwagen has a similar format as the Mid-Cab with a platform bed in the front and open cab in the rear. The caption on this ad reads “We’ve Come Full Circle,” and the subtext discusses the Plattenwagen as the impetus for the original Transporter, as well as this model.

The final advertisement that the viewer comes to contains an image of the front of a Volkswagen beetle with the hood open, and a view to the front trunk space. The tagline on this one reads “You Spoke, We Listened.” The supporting text talks about Volkswagen receiving thousands of letters over the years praising the front storage space of the Beetle, and how the new Mid-Cab continues that tradition.

As the audience continues to move around the vehicle to the front glass wall of the gallery there is a short four foot section of wall which contains two elements that briefly describe the origin of the specific vehicle present in the gallery. The first is a small 1/64 scale diorama of

the physical location that the vehicle was found (fig. 13). And the second element is a cast bronze plaque that commemorates the “Harrison” Mid-Cab (named for the town in Arkansas near the Missouri border where the vehicle was found) and provides a small fictitious narrative of its discovery. This final component brings the viewer full circle around the exhibition and back to the vehicle and toward the entrance.

The use of space is very tactfully considered in the Zitrone exhibition. An earlier version of the layout had the vehicle set closer to the support materials that were densely concentrated in the corners broken up by the vehicle in the middle. The vehicle is obviously the thing that first grabs the audience's attention through the glass, but by moving it closer to the glass and away from the entrance the viewer is directed toward the support material first. Keeping the vehicle just out of reach as the audience explores the timeline and other documents keeps them engaged in learning the story before inspecting the vehicle providing a holistic encounter as opposed to a fragmented one. By considering space as a way to unify an experience by strategically separating elements the project becomes much stronger as a whole.

Conceptual Framework:

The conceptual framework for Zitrone was developed around the writings of several contemporary critics and writers as well as a few historical theorists. The writing of Lewis Hyde, in “Trickster Makes This World,” Dave Hickey’s *Air Guitar*, and David Robbins’ *Concrete Comedy* comprise the bulk of the contemporary structure that this thesis is built upon. Meanwhile, the short stories of Jose Luis Borges in *Ficciones* provide additional context and connection to the tradition of artists questioning authorship and history.

Lewis Hyde’s book *Trickster Makes This World* was extremely influential in establishing my understanding of my relationship with and to the viewer of my artwork, and has set the stage for where I position myself in relation to the work in Zitrone and the audience of the exhibition. In the writing, Hyde outlines the situations and origins of numerous “trickster” characters

representing various cultures and various points throughout history. One of the key figures that Hyde uses to explain the nature of these characters that typically reside between the gods and man is the raven character present in Northern Pacific coast Native American tribal histories. He points out instances that are key to Raven's character such as his theft of water and daylight from the gods to the benefit of man. Lewis Hyde sums up the qualities of the trickster character thus:

They are the lords of the in-between. A trickster does not live near the hearth; he does not live in the halls of justice, the soldiers tent, the shamans hut, the monastery. He passes through each of these when there is a moment of silence, and he enlivens each with mischief, but he is not their guiding spirit. He is the spirit of the doorway leading out, and of the crossroad at the edge of town (the one where a little market springs up). He is the spirit of the road at dusk, the one that runs from one town to another and belongs to neither (Hyde 6).

In relation to this description of trickster the loose character that I play in the exhibition as it is presented to the audience is that of artist curator, collecting information and artifacts and creating and organizing the infrastructure for its presentation. As a middle man between history and learner I straddle that boundary that the trickster straddles, but as with trickster there is more at play in that in between space as artifice is introduced skewing the perception of reality.

The decision to use an automobile as medium and subject in *Zitrone* is one that warrants some attention. There are and have been many other subjects and materials used to highlight and question historical presentation (eagle art in the case of Marcel Broodthaers, and a shipwreck for Damien Hirst) but the vehicle serves a very specific purpose in *Zitrone*.

There is an essay in Dave Hickey's book *Air Guitar* titled "The Birth of the Big Beautiful Art Market" that helps explain the logic behind the use of the car in this exhibition. The essay begins with a focus on Hickey's upbringing in the west and how cars were the basis of learning for him as a child "Thus, of necessity I learned car math and car engineering, car poli-sci and car economics, car anthropology and car beaux-arts" (Hickey 61). He continues on to describe how all of the formal principles and elements of art that he would later be introduced to in art education were already learned in the garages, backyards, and shows associated with car

culture. He recounts a conversation with Luis Jimenez in the late sixties that drives home this point:

...Luis explained to me that his earliest ideas of becoming an artist had come from watching the glimmering lowriders cruising the streets of Juarez and El Paso. They seemed to him, he said, the ultimate synthesis of painting and sculpture - the ultimate accommodation of solidity and translucency - and more importantly, for Luis, they seemed a bridge between the past and the future because he recognized the visual language of the Baroque in these magical automobiles, in the way the smooth folds of steel and the hundreds of coats of transparent lacquer caught the light and held it as the cars slipped through the bright streets like liquid color - like Caravaggio meets Bernini, on wheels (Hickey 69).

My own introduction and integration into fine art began with similar a origin in the aesthetics of custom and hot rod culture, one that is being brought back into the art and back into the gallery with *Zitrone*. In contrast, however, to the gleaming customs of magazines, the Mid-Cab at the center of *Zitrone* is left rusty, dented, and faded defying the massive amount of fabrication and customization, alluding to its history and leaving the viewer to decipher its reality. The vehicle as medium serves to attract a more blue-collar audience that is potentially as formally attuned, but perhaps less familiar than a typical gallery audience.

Humor is an important method of communication in the *Zitrone* exhibition in that it provides an in road and an attraction to the subject. Varying tastes and interests may deter the attention of some potential audiences toward the exhibition, but the absurdly, comically backward configuration of the Mid-Cab vehicle piques the interest of those who would otherwise be disinterested in an automobile exhibit, while the potential, eventual discovery of its fakeness provides an additional delayed humor. In his book "Concrete Comedy: An Alternative History of Twentieth-Century Comedy" David Robbins postulates the potential of the comedic object taken to its extent:

Concrete comedy is for real. It is non-fiction comedy, the comedy of things done for real, of things really done, and it yields not funny lines but, instead, sophisticated existential gestures and comic objects. Expanded to its logical limit, this non-fiction comedy becomes a comic life (Robbins, 23).

Zitrone seeks to work in this nonfiction way. The Mid-Cab is a “thing done for real” while it is not a historical model it is an actual vehicle from history (aside from its modifications) and the inclusion of realness from opening doors to functioning steering give it actuality. These details imbue the vehicle with a humor that is internalized rather than a superficial one that could be dismissed without further exploration.

The writings of Jose Luis Borges and his use of cleverly woven narratives that blend history into fiction almost seamlessly set the groundwork for the structure of the *Zitrone* exhibition. Borges’s book of short stories *Ficciones* contains a story titled “Three Versions of Judas” which exemplifies this blending of history and fiction. The writing is a critical analysis of the theoretical writings of an author who never existed. Throughout the writing Borges uses authentic historical characters, completely fictitious characters, and characters that existed, but not in the capacity that they are written in the story. The actual content of the fictional writing that is being critiqued feels less important than the structure of the whole itself, and the idea of inventing a text for the sole purpose of critiquing it.

Zitrone participates in this tradition of mixing truth with falsity and critiquing an invented narrative. The Mid-Cab vehicle that the exhibition is centered around was created to be a flop, a “Lemon” as the title confirms in German. It was created this way for several reasons, one of which is to set up the possibility for a critique of the object by authentic historical sources namely “Car and Driver” magazine and the iconic illustrations of Peter Aschwanden. This interwoven truth and falsity creates the convolution that drives the viewer to explore further and sets up a scenario of confusion induced questioning.

The importance of questioning the possibility or impossibility of historical accuracy is evident in the climate of “alternative facts” and disinformation campaigns in which we currently live. While a heightening awareness to sources of information is the current trend, there are sources (such as the museum) that are often overlooked in this scrutinizing. It is this space of

questioning that *Zitrone* seeks to promote through its borrowed techniques of display and presentation of information.

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Figures:



Figure 1. *Zitrone* (installation view) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 2. *Zitrone* (installation view) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 3. *Zitrone* (installation view) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 4. *Zitrone* (installation view) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 5. *Zitrone* (emblem ghost image) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 6. *Zitrone* (title and introduction) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.

1973 – An oil
crisis created by the
oil embargo,
a gasoline
shortage resulting in high
prices for fuel efficient
vehicles in the U.S.

April 1974 – Volkswagen announces
the Mid-Cab model and immediately
receives negative review from Car
and Driver magazine. The article
includes an image of a barge
spawning the nickname that would
permanently stick.

June 1974 –
advertisements for
Mid-Cab model
in popular mag
azines. Noticeably
any actual i
the vehicle



Figure 7. *Zitrone* (timeline) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 8. *Zitrone* (Car and Driver review) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 9. *Zitrone* (service manual illustration) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 10. *Zitrone* (badge re-creation) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 11. *Zitrone* (badge re-creation detail) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 12. *Zitrone* (Mid-Cab advertisements) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 13. *Zitrone* (scale model) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 14. *Zitrone* (scale model detail) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser, used with permission.



Figure 15. *Zitrone* (installation view) 2019. Mixed media. Dimensions Variable. Photo Josh Loeser used with permission.