James Krone
The Wilderness (is the Witches Leash) at Country Club
(in Rudolph Schindler's *Buck House*). February 13 - April 3, 2010

LOS ANGELES, CA.- Country Club presents a new body of work by James Krone. "The Wilderness is the Witches Leash" features new sculptures and paintings from this Berlin-based artist.

The significance of the black monochrome painting to the narrative of modernism means that anybody making one now is, to some extent, qualifying an existing sign. It is the monolithic image of the 20th Century Avant-garde. James Krone's black paintings are not strictly black monochromes but a complex layering of violet, red and blue, which use color to comment on the received idea of the black painting. Imagine the history as a ground over which Krone rewrites.

Art & Language's Secret Painting, 1967-68, consists of two square canvases next to each other, one all black, the other all white but with a sentence printed on it announcing that which is unknowable in the content of the black canvas. It might be the first postmodern artwork, the text a conceptualist tool qualifying the inherited pretensions of the Black Square. Krone's black paintings unite the transcendental image with the disillusioned postmodern commentary. Their serial format comprehends the process of reproduction, which is one essential template for art's commodification. The paintings are simultaneously unique and reproduced, modernist and postmodernist, nostalgic and futuristic, archly serious and tongue-in-cheek.

Krone's paintings are shadowed by a range of definitive modernist strategies. That they overlap in his paintings is a sign of the distance the series keeps from its antecedents. There is Frank Stella's workaday application of paint in stripes of a regular modulated width, avoiding expressionistic facture. There is the generic modernist hang of a sequence of equal-sized rectangles. There are the formalistic geometries of Krone's composition that derive, self-reflexively, from the shape of the support. There is the minimalistic repetition of that composition which implicitly denies invention and originality. These strategies carry over something of the categorical aura of their sources, the sense that each originally presented itself as the only possible solution to a problem. Krone's transformation is to blend them all simultaneously into structures that are non-hierarchical.

Black paintings are always driving towards the ultimate darkness, the undifferentiated surface; the total black that brooks no contradictions and absorbs all light. A plane that is both all opaque and all transparent. They speak a language of binaries and polarities. Krone's black paintings are skeletons of that ultimate allover black plane, as Brice Marden described his later gestural paintings as the skeletons of his earlier monochromes. They diagrammatically project a process which would produce the allover black painting if it were followed to its logical extreme, but they hold off and allow the results to function as questioning projections of the potentiality of an absolute statement.

Mark Prince