

Plug In

#52

Lily van der Stokker and guest: Jim Isermann

Lily van der Stokker and Jim Isermann first met at Feature Gallery in New York in 1992. At that time both had solo exhibitions at the gallery shared a long wall space side by side. Isermann describes their first encounter as follows: *"One of Lily's wall paintings crept into my half of that wall. I was exhibiting a set of stained glass panels and a long cast coloured shadow fell across Lily's wall work. It was a beautiful serendipitous occurrence that now seems prescient of our Plug In."* Lily van der Stokker recalls the meeting as follows: *"The work from Jim I most remember is a red and blue geometric painting and weaving (2-3m) in combination with a large round sitting element tufted in the same geometric pattern in front of the painting. That the image devaluates when used as a sitting device shows a love for the decorative and deconstructing the ways we are looking at art I share with Jim."*

Jim Isermann is well known for liberating formal and conceptual parameters around art and design. His artwork explores the relationship between abstraction and design. For his work uses, for example, ordinary household materials like plywood, fabric, nylon, paint, cotton, glass, hand crafts, furniture, rugs, weavings, quilts, but also wallpaper design, and stained glass incorporating vibrant patterns and tactile materials. Working in the field of art and design for the last 25 years, Isermann has a lot of experience in the exchange of visual information between high art and post-war industrial design.

For this Plug In # 52 Lily van der Stokker asked Isermann to react towards her diagonal-grid wallpaper design. Isermann suggested to place four sets of 'vacuum form' panels in the centre of each wall in the space. The surfaces of the silver and orange coloured panels are arranged in open star-shaped intersections, which reveal a peek-a-boo glimpse onto the green and orange plaid wallpaper of van der Stokker. Isermann's work utilizes commercial production methods, such as vacuum forming. Similarly Lilly's wallpaper design and production emphasizes a relationship with industrial design.

For this project research curator Kerstin Niemann (KN) converses with Lily van der Stokker (Lvds) and Jim Isermann (JI) about the interaction of these two artistic positions in a museum space:

KN: Both of your works play with conceptual aesthetics as well as industrial design patterns. To what extent is it important to you to reveal information about the resource of your works?

Jl: One normally thinks of plaids or check patterns as having to do with the standard manufacturing limitations of woven fabrics. But when I see a diagonal plaid I assume it is printed. I also understand that it was not possible to produce the wallpaper by traditional processes. So for me Lily's wallpaper design and production emphasizes an industrial design relationship. I maintained a fantasy about manufactured elements being identical. In vacuum

forming, a sheet of plastic is heated and then formed over a custom tool. Once it is has cooled, the shape is trimmed. It came as a surprise to see the subtle variation that can result from a commercial manufacturing process. The surface paint application adds another possibility for variation. Lily and I both have a history of work that exploits a hand made aesthetic or process. In my work, that utilizes commercial production methods, the subtleties of manufacture and the labour-intensive installation replace the handmade.

In addition Lily van der Stokker points towards the question of authenticity in the presentation of Jim Isermann's vacuum panels.

Lvds: Can you tell me how you relate to the repetitive in your work, is it similar to my love for the decorative, a desire for filling up the space with pattern, a celebration of abundance versus... minimalism? We both come from modernist schools. But we are definitely more relaxed about playing around with rules of authenticity and in your case mass-production. In my case its classical (not original) imagery. Do you think by making this work on top of my wallpaper, that your work loses some of its authenticity? Does it matter that your hand does not make the background on which you are placing your art?

Jl: I am really interested in how a single element can create a complex repetition by a simple sequence of the elements' orientation. The two variations, with either a hard or soft edge, have a completely different sensation. Often the site determines the scale of, or number of modules. I designed a vinyl decal wall specifically on top of which to hang my 1999 survey exhibition. I guess the relevant precursor for this would be Warhol's survey at the Whitney Museum in the early 70's where his paintings were hung atop his cow wallpaper. This is something I have thought about for a long time. I'd say the big difference for the Plug In #52 is the interaction between the works. They are sympathetic as I stated above and both are dominant and yet I think the exhibition makes clear our basic disparities

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and similarities. I think Lily's work is fundamentally passive-aggressive. The viewer is lulled into something seemingly familiar, but the work's more subversive side, that deals with cultural taste and aspiration, sneaks up on you. I think my work is aggressively optimistic and deceptively simple but with a very pragmatic logic and a melancholy aftertaste. Neither is what you might think at first blush.

Lily van der Stokker plays with coding systems, structures and hierarchies in her work. She contextualizes the relationship between art and decoration similarly to Isermann and feels that decoration is often seen as second-rate.

"But in that respect it is also supportive. Decoration aims to frame, to encircle, as well as being flattening, filling and extravagant. And decoration can also defile the dominance of the white exhibition spaces", says van der Stokker. "The holiness of art is definitely deconstructed if you are going to sit on it! A large white space with a small artwork in it suggests the production of truth. Decoration is supposedly lacking in content. So I do think our wallpaper room project is challenging various rules of behaviour of our looking at art."

Jim Isermann, Kerstin Niemann, Lily van der Stokker

Jim Isermann

1955, Kenosha, WI (US)
Lives and works in Palm Springs, CA (US)

In this room with wall paper designed by **Lily van der Stokker**, you see an installation from Jim Isermann that consists of the following works:

1.
Untitled (0101) (16 orange), 2001
Paint, vacuum-formed ABS, 244 x 244 cm

Courtesy Corvi-Mora, London

2.
Untitled (0101) (32 silver), 2001
Paint, vacuum-formed ABS, 244 x 488 cm

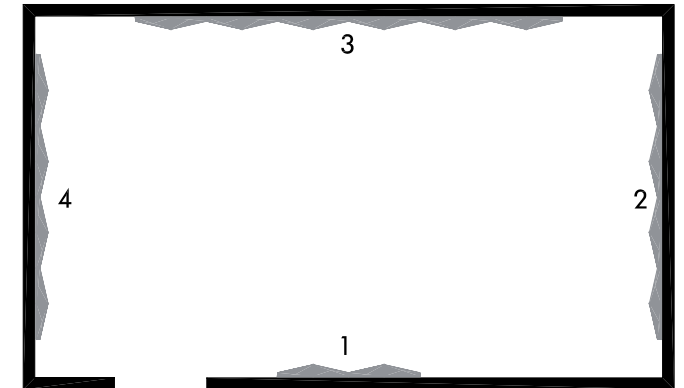
Courtesy Praz-Delavallade, Paris / Berlin

3.
Untitled (0101) (48 silver), 2001
Paint, vacuum-formed ABS, 244 x 731 cm

Courtesy Praz-Delavallade, Paris / Berlin

4.
Untitled (0101) (32 orange), 2001
Paint, vacuum-formed ABS, 244 x 488 cm

Courtesy: Corvi-Mora, London



Plug In

In April 2006 the first 'episodes' of Plug In were shown – a new series of collection displays put together by guest curators, including artists. Each museum space has its own independent, themed display as well as its own time span. By sequentially changing the spaces, fresh narratives, surprising links and revealing contrasts are constantly being invoked.

Plug In has been realised in part by a contribution by the Mondriaan Stichting.

Cicerone?

For more detailed questions you can go to one of the museum cicerones, a 'walking encyclopaedia' who is happy to take the time to answer personally your more in-depth questions about exhibitions, art works and architecture. Cicerones can be recognised by a badge with a question mark.

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