

Mitchell Syrop
The Same Mistake
14. 3. – 18. 4. 2015

Mitchell Syrop's work has a basis in the visual shape and discordance of language. Usually brief in nature, he has developed a dry, distinctive tone in which he plays with language as a material to be modified and questioned.

Moving from New York to Los Angeles in the mid 1970s, Syrop gained access to film and image reproduction technology at CalArts, which, along with the scale of LA's advertising and television industries, made a huge impact on his work. In the early 1980s he began combining the most generic style of images with charged and reductive clichés and advertising slogans. The results kept a slick, seductive surface lying bare the advertising strategies and mechanisms of that period.

The works on view at Croy Nielsen belong to Syrop's 'Torn-series', and stem from the mid 1980s through the late 1990s. Idyllic landscape posters and wall-papers with words torn into and out of them, lend their motifs to stock phrases, familiar as pop-cultural mantras charged with acculturated meaning. "Pull Yourself Together" runs across a view of snowy mountains mirroring in a lake, "Live Nude" is paired with a tropical beach, while "Take Pity" turns up on a water fall including rainbow. The back wall of the gallery is covered by a photographic wallpaper featuring palm trees, and reading "Don't Quit Your Day Job".

The 'Torn-series' marks a shift in Syrop's practice. Whereas his previous series had featured sharp and perfect fonts typical of that period's advertising along with various appropriated images, here the actual material and images are torn and processed rather than merely re-photographed. The result is no less graphical, let alone due to the figure-ground issue at stake, but the voice has changed radically. It becomes louder, even hysterical in comparison. The physical gesture of tearing the letters, is held together in a persistent scheme: phrases run over varying versions of the same kind of idyllic scenery, pricking escapist fantasy, and always free of human presence. The capital, bold letters of similar size are repeated throughout the works, as a sort of a manual font. Phrases varying from short pairings like "Live Nude" or "Take Pity" to common sayings like "Pull Yourself Together", are all ran through the same machine, comparable to that of the copier, lending a voice to the early punk movement. The irritation experienced through the logical discrepancy of the physical counterparts (juxtaposition of the image vs. written word) forms Syrop's rebuke of mass communication and its unreflected reception.

Mitchell Syrop (b. 1953 in New York) was the subject of two solo exhibitions at Midway Contemporary, Minneapolis in 2014, and has exhibited widely over the years including solo exhibitions at Thomas Solomon Gallery, Los Angeles, Richard Kuhlenschmidt, Los Angeles, and The Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica. He has participated in numerous group exhibitions at, amongst other places, Casey Kaplan, New York, MOCA, Los Angeles and Orange County Museum, Los Angeles. This is his first solo show in Germany.

