

REVIEW – Group Exhibition

November 1st – End of December 2008

To „review“ implies making a critical examination, or revisiting something that one has learned: to look back at something, with distance. The exhibition „Review“ at Galerie Neu joins works by seven artists who through different media and forms all offer a reflection on the nature of surface and abstraction. Through play with materials and/or modes of production, each artist in „Review“ challenges the viewer to consider notions of two dimensionality, materiality and painting as object.

In the mid 1990's Francesco Vezzoli began a series of embroidered works that used paintings by Josef Albers as literal patterns for embroidery. As the title of the piece in „Review“ indicates, HOMAGE TO JOSEF ALBERS'S "HOMAGE TO THE SQUARE" (FADE TO GREY), these works are tributes to Albers' achievement. More importantly, however, they also constitute an attempt at repositioning Albers' work into a new critical and gendered discourse. In his embroidery, Vezzoli conflates the work of Albers and his wife Anni, replacing flat opticality with a sewn tactility more familiar in the domestic sphere than in the white cube. The monochrome denim surface of Andreas Slominski's work „Bilder aller Türklinken auf der Erde“ (Painting of all doorknobs on Earth), also casts a similar historical glance. Reminiscent of modernist monochromes or Yves Klein's blue surfaces, Slominski's „painting“ is, however, made from the most ubiquitous, banal material: ordinary denim. As such, Slominski slyly plays with principles of universality, replacing the modernist attempt to achieve universality through purity of form with an expanse of material, which is universally available and entirely familiar. Further takes on the trope of the monochrome come in the form of works by Sergej Jensen and British artist Alan Charlton. Jensen's white monochrome is made up of layer upon layer of primers and glazes, which the artist has laboriously applied and then sanded down. The result is a painting of nothing but the materials of its making. Charlton's work, on the other hand, expands the dimensions of the monochrome surface, extending the canvas onto the gallery wall.

The „artist“ Claire Fontaine extends her own critical practice in this exhibition to paintings that question the relationship between sign and painting, signifier and object. In two series, „pills“ and „secret paintings“, Fontaine has contracted out paintings to sign painters in Mexico. In the „pill“ paintings, the viewer is presented with a metaphorical representation of an advertisement for commodities (pills). The object of the painting itself is, of course, a commodity as well. Fontaine highlights this fact not only through the depicted subject matter, but also through the fact the painting has already been bought and sold prior to exhibition as part of the chain of commerce

which has taken place between the „artist“ and commercial artists who produced the work. In the series „secret painting“, hands are shown typing in a pin-code on an ATM. The images are lifted from warnings on cash machines to conceal one's secret code. The paintings, therefore, are representations of something invisible, flip-flopping between abstraction and literal signs. Nick Mauss generally makes works on paper that incorporate elements of printed matter (framing or serial repetition of forms, for example) with painterly gesture. In his new sculptural works, primed aluminum is printed with elements from Mauss' own drawings and then cut and folded up. The aluminum becomes a physical representation of the two dimensional page while the mark of the hand is mechanized through the printing process. Kitty Kraus's works made of men's suit fabric also investigate a place between sculpture and drawing. Cutting up the cloth and then laying it on the ground, or between sculpture and drawing. Cutting up the cloth and then la draping it between wall and floor, Kraus alludes to both a history of modernist abstraction and the body, which she presents as a set of dismembered forms.

Ull Hohn's untitled work from 1994 also alludes to the body through a series of shiny, lacquered but bumpy panels painted in a Caucasian skin tone. The panels are arranged around a shelf and each panel is labeled with an adjective. The words, such as „debauched“, „gentle“, or „licentious“ appear to refer to stereotypes of gay sexuality. In orchestrating this arrangement on and around the shelf, Hohn's luscious, labeled panels mount a moving critique of abstraction removed from social politics, commodity, prejudice and desire. Galerie Neu is pleased to present „Review“ for the remainder of 2008.

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