

Eva Berendes' artworks often approximate, in their appearance and manufacture, objects commonly associated with crafts and applied arts. Her 'folding screens' and 'curtains' are obvious examples of this approach. Similarly, her plaster reliefs, freestanding sculptures stretched with string, or screens consisting of patchworked fabric constructions, employ applied art techniques while simultaneously negotiating questions of abstract painting. It is Berendes' integration of these two areas of praxis that highlights the tenuous nature of their categorical differentiation, and questions the validity of this division.

Accordingly, movements that have tackled the relationship between fine arts and applied arts, such as Art Deco, Bauhaus, or the Arts and Crafts Movement, are important points of reference for the artist. Eva Berendes is particularly interested in the irreverent revival of these movements during the 1980s when artist and designer groups such as Memphis flouted established conventions normally applied to design objects, and outfitted them with quotes from modern art.

In the exhibition *Silk, Grids & Souvenirs*, Eva Berendes presents silks with intensely hued colour field and line designs whose composition and palette evokes a rather 'worldly' type of formal abstraction. The silks are mounted using only a set of two magnets that attach to slender white wall fixtures. In an interplay between magnetic force and gravity acting upon the fabric, a delicate draping of the material is produced. The resulting slight undulation of the material subjects the abstract composition to a subtle distortion, undercutting its rigidity. Here, as in other works by the artist, the presentation of each piece is integral to the artwork; by creating a symbiotic relationship between image and image-support, the works imply a paradigmatic equivalency of the two.

Eva Berendes juxtaposes the silks with expansive sculptures. Constructed from white card, they resemble architectural fragments or retail furnishings such as counters and display units. These objects consist merely of a thin outer skin; the reverse of the sculptures is left open, thereby creating the impression of a mock-up or prop. Similar to actual props that, as objects, imitate other objects, it is less the sculptures' actual physicality that is at issue, but the image or idea of a sculptural object. Grid drawings that, in their size and proportion, resemble architectural ceramic tiles additionally emphasize the sculpture's surface. The site of 'real' materiality is taken up by found ceramic objects, 'real' objects, whose coloured figures have been arranged on the sculptures. Whether these sculptures function as plinth or stage for the ceramics, or conversely, whether the ceramics are intended as decorative pretext for the sculptures, remains open.

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