



## Gaylen Gerber

February 28 – April 12, 2009

WHITEFLAGPROJECTS.ORG

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In this exhibition, Gaylen Gerber presents five artworks in a modified exhibition space that confuses easy distinctions between object and context and heightens awareness of visual perception in a way that questions how we differentiate what we are looking at from what surrounds it.

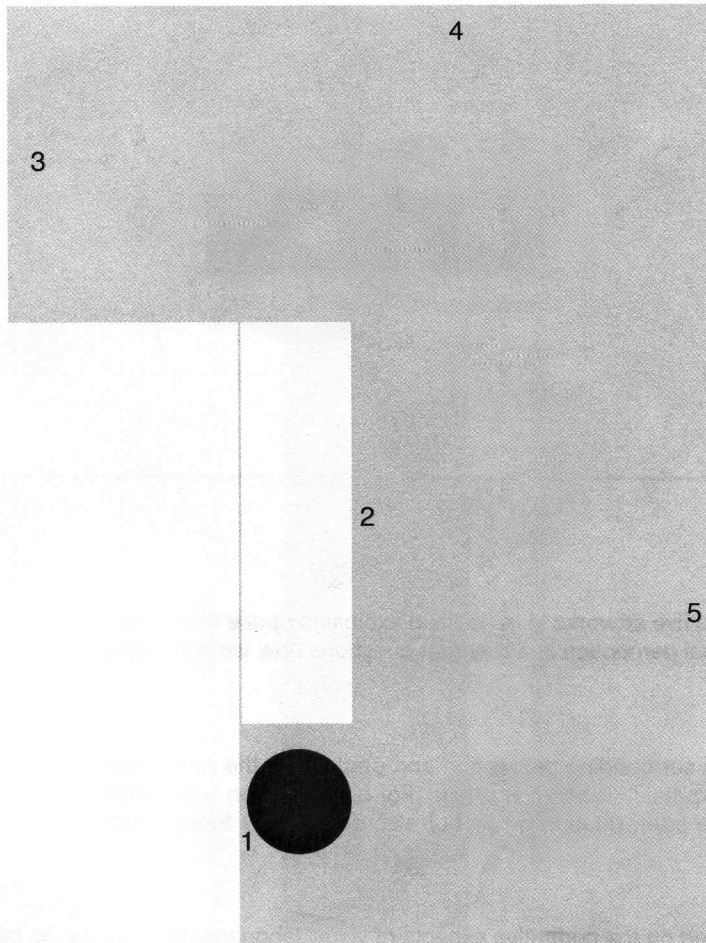
Gerber is interested in addressing ideas surrounding perception and particularly the role of context in perception. Gerber's own work often acts as the contextual ground for the expressions of other artists. For his exhibition with White Flag Projects, Gerber continues to examine the role of the contextual ground in the interpretation of art but also specifically foregrounds the background as an expressive element itself.

In previous exhibitions Gerber has focused on the normative aspects of visual language: the way we, as part of a shared culture, accept certain forms, colors, etc. as institutional, or we take them for granted as neutral common ground. These visual norms act as grounds for all other forms of expression and we use them to register difference and create meaning. Gerber's own work is often positioned so that it highlights these relationships by representing the frequently invisible normative aspects of visual language, suggested by their "neutral" gray color as well as by the casting of other expressions as the figurative elements against this ground.

In this exhibition, Gerber presents a number of photographic artworks, each depicting a clear sky on a bright day. These images are representational but also appear to be blank fields and thus they confuse the distinctions between figure and ground. For example, in *Untitled (Clear Sky)*, the photographic image of a clear sky is nearly identical to the appearance of developed photographic paper. Taking the five photographs as his starting point, Gerber further conflates differences between image and ground by applying additional images over some of the photographs, questioning both the implicit neutrality of the ground and emphasizing the fluid and conditional quality of the relationship between expression and ground. Gerber also uses the color of the Plexiglas frames, which are fabricated from Plexiglas used in Daniel Buren's work *Crossing through the Colors*, 2006, and the color of the light in the space itself, to suggest a further porosity in the elements of the exhibition. For example, when we try to "see" *Clear Sky/Flower*, a gelatin silver print installed on the south wall of the main gallery, it's uncertain whether the color perceived is contained within the image, the frame, or the exhibition space. It almost seems that everything but the image of the clear sky, including the whole of the exhibition context that would normally become its background, remains in the foreground of our perception and understanding. Conversely, when we focus on the work, it's unclear exactly where the context ends and the artwork begins. By heightening and even confusing perception Gerber returns us to an individual visceral experience that suspends easy apprehension.

Recognizing the shifting relationships between deviation and the normative ground is at the heart of Gerber's exhibition and draws attention to a central aspect of perception, which is that to perceive something at all you must first be able to distinguish it from its background.

Gaylen Gerber has exhibited widely. Recent solo exhibitions and cooperative projects include: The Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg, Luxembourg; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, Bremen, Germany; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; and the FRAC-Bourgogne and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, France. In 1992 Gerber's work was included in Documenta IX, Kassel, Germany.



## CHECKLIST

- 1- *Untitled (Clear Sky)*, 1991, 2009, gelatin silver print, Plexiglas frame, 31 3/8 x 31 3/8"
- 2- *Clear Sky/Flower*, 1995-96, gelatin silver print, charcoal, Plexiglas frame fabricated from a souvenir from Daniel Buren's *Crossing Through the Colors*, 2006, 31 3/8 x 31 3/8"
- 3- *Untitled (Clear Sky)* 1991, 2009, gelatin silver print, Plexiglas frame fabricated from a souvenir from Daniel Buren's *Crossing Through the Colors*, 2006, 31 3/8 x 31 3/8"
- 4- *Clear Sky/Garden Addition*, 1997, Ilfochrome, charcoal, Plexiglas frame, 31 3/8 x 31 3/8"
- 5- *Clear Sky/Green Area*, 1995-96, 2009, gelatin silver print, charcoal, Plexiglas frame fabricated from a souvenir from Daniel Buren's *Crossing Through the Colors*, 2006, 31 3/8 x 31 3/8"

All works courtesy the artist and Rowley Kennerk Gallery, Chicago.

White Flag Projects is a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit alternative art gallery established to improve the viability of contemporary visual arts in St. Louis by producing meaningful exhibitions by progressive local, national, and international artists.

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