

The Kaleidoscope project space hosts "The Horizon Behind Us," a group exhibition with Pedro Barateiro, David Diao, Marte Eknæs, Lara Favaretto, Bojan Sarcević and Daniel Sinsel. The exhibition, curated by Michele D'Aurizio, offers a reflection on the legacy of the "orthodox" Modern Movement, and in particular, the compositional sensibility that marked its approach to architectural design.

The curricula of architecture schools include a discipline called "architectural composition." This discipline lays out a set of strategies for the organization of space through which the design takes shape. Though born with architecture itself, the Modern Movement made architectural composition its keystone in the name of man's "natural desire for order" (Le Corbusier). Borrowing the compositional attitude from the geometric abstraction, but going beyond the latter's assumption of arbitrariness through the principle of the "truth of the material," modernist architecture materialized the "unmet needs" of the avant-garde. Filtered through modernist aesthetics (and ethics), the design took on the traits of an abstract representation of urban complexity.

The artists in the exhibition reappropriate the design strategies of the Modern Movement and provide a critical, materialist, and at times ironic interpretation of the internal contradictions of the modernist story.

Icons of modernism float on the surface of the clean monochromes of David Diao (b.1943, Chengdu, Sichuan, China, lives and works in New York), symbols of utopian dissolution in the art of the architecture preached (and never built) by the avant-garde, which Diao interprets with exquisite irreverence. The artist describes his painting as "little more than a quaint set of formalist puzzles and historical in-jokes." The canvases on display, representing the carpet of the Glass House by Philip Johnson, thus become an allegory of failure: the carpet will continue to shrink each time it is washed, irrespective of the strict dictates of the architect regarding arrangement of the furnishings in it...

Similarly, Pedro Barateiro (b.1979, Almada, Portugal, lives and works in Lisbon) appropriates the formal language of art, design and modernist architecture: however, the abstract configurations that he obtains by placing dozens of gold pencils on the floor are the result of a performative gesture, as if to emphasize the arbitrariness inherent in any "design."

That the (real) form is never arbitrary, but always "necessary" and "inferred", is another imperative of the modernist orthodoxy which finds a counterpoint in the work of Bojan Sarcević (b.1974, Belgrade, lives and works in Berlin and Paris). The artist reveals how research gestalt is always

threatened by the spectre of the ornament and the "manner". His works thus transcend the dichotomy between function and decoration and enhance the expressiveness and sensual properties of the materials. Similarly, the painting of Daniel Sinsel (b.1976, Munich, lives and works in London) captures the urgency of the purity of form that led to modernist architecture, while revealing its latent fetishism. The painting on display in the exhibition echoes the theories of Rosalind Krauss on the grid as the evolution of the painting-as-window in symbolist art. It can be interpreted as a tautological expression of the primary role of the grid in abstract painting.

The installation by Lara Favaretto (b.1973, Treviso, lives and works in Turin) acts like a grid that gives form to the eye of the visitor. The work constitutes a barrier to the perception of the space, but at the same time, emphasizes the internal organization of the exhibition, highlighting a diagonal - the sign with a more "gestural" quality, in terms of both the abstract canvas and modernist design.

Finally, Marte Eknæs (b.1978, Norway, lives and works in Berlin) brings a fresh approach to the constructivist interpretation of urban complexity. Her works come from a reflection on particular urban contexts, immediately acquiring their autonomy in the symbolic language underlying architectural design. The sculpture in this exhibition is part of a series carried out to comment on the urban renewal process in an area of Oslo known as the Bjørvika. The classical design elements that the planners rely on for this kind of operation (urban landscaping, the bike path, altered road networks, etc...) are exposed as clichés. Without any ideological inspiration, nothing remains but the mere need for form.

In the sociological vision of Henri Lefebvre, the individual who inhabits so-called "abstract space," that is, the design space, is subject to a process of "detachment" from his own historical and natural characteristics, such as age, sex, and ethnicity. Here, "experience is crushed, the thought stands higher," writes Lefebvre. "History is lived as nostalgia, nature as regret. The horizon is behind us."

On February 11, *Kaleidoscope* will host a lecture by Pier Vittorio Aureli (b.1973, Rome, lives and works in Rotterdam). Aureli is an architectural theorist whose research is like an invitation to a "subversive" use of form in architecture. In his lecture, he will explore the political implications of the practice of Ad Reinhardt, in relation to concepts of abstraction and autonomy in art.

The group exhibition "The Horizon Behind Us" is part of the programming for the *Kaleidoscope* project space, with the 2010-2011 season curated by Michele D'Aurizio and Eva Fabbris.

With the support of P + P Studio, FARE and Open Care – Services for art.

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