

*Painted on The Wall of The Inn at Marlotte*

Existing within the present moment, mired in our contemporary landscape of images that slip across surfaces, both intimate and large, intangible and physical, Jordan Derrien's production of paintings as spaces of negation and absence is a notable fixation, an action that feels concurrently speculative yet also astutely mindful of the medium's long-winded genealogies. Building on his previous preoccupations with enclosure and concealment, Derrien has expanded his considerations to look beyond the surface of the canvas and explore its wider associated networks.

A text by the psychoanalyst Gérard Wajcman is an important precursor for these works. The writing diverges from the oft-quoted idea that paintings either serve as windows out onto the world or exist as mirrors that reflect the world back to the viewer. Wajcman suggests that paintings can also operate as barriers—hiding as much as they reveal—as through installing the work, you fundamentally obscure the area of the wall the work hangs on. Utilising this divergent thesis as a productive methodology, the works included in *Painted on The Wall of The Inn at Marlotte* hold this peculiar either/or conflict firmly at their core, at once both obscuring and revealing, reflecting, and refracting in perpetuity. Each painting becomes a cipher for an idea of the wall it is destined to sit upon, negating its own existence and painting's own histories, in a constant state of entropy. On viewing, the work's collective grammar and objecthood recede, and what progresses outward is this palpable idea of painting, *in this moment*, defining its existence as a slippery object of obfuscation; one that resists its previous rigidities.

Through the rhetoric of the diptych, two conflicting tones perform against each other in a range of pairings: forest green against claret, office cubicle grey beside a rich maroon, a floaty vellum touching pitch black. In each instance, Derrien pits an acrylic colour against a contending tone of oil paint – a gesture that serves to heighten the binary between the painting's classic status as a commodity and its ultimate relation to an idea of a destined domestic setting. Across their range of scales, each of the painting's surfaces has been underscored with architectural adornment of wooden moulding, an affixation that corrupts the usual indexical relationship the commodity of the painting has to its surrounding location, and thereby asserts itself capable of prescribing its own reality.

These collected works, free from pictorial distractions, appear to fix time in their stillness and vacancy in a manner that is redolent of a photographic image. Together they enact a re-registering of the world that extends beyond the frame, but these are emphatically not Images. They are fragments of a stylised reality, a transcription of the real, a quotation of absence. I am reminded of Hito Steyerl's paraphrasing of Walter Benjamin here, "As such, the image is without expression. It doesn't represent reality. It is a fragment of the real world. It is a thing just like any other—a thing like you and me." The works, through their clarity of expression as painting, in combination with their material adornments that evoke their own typical settings, carefully reorient our conceptions of what a painting can be. Subsuming the wall achieves its agency. The final hang of a work within the domestic space is symbolic of the artwork retreating from its networks of distribution, reception, and visibility. The wall, in this and every case, is a painting's end point, and through the painting mimicking this final curtain, this climax, Derrien neatly asserts painting as this profoundly mutable medium, considerate of its problematics but also its potentials and relevance to this contemporary malaise.

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