

Gaylen Gerber
The Green Gallery

For this exhibition, Gerber presents two artworks in a modified exhibition space that confuses easy distinctions between object and context and heightens awareness of visual perception, questioning 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 expression of other artists. For this exhibition, 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.

Gerber typically focuses 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 artworks in which he uses silver as an alternate neutral. Gerber applies silver to one side of a number of remnants (which are commonly known as souvenirs) from Daniel Buren's in-situ work *Crossing Through the Colors*. Buren is well known for making work that relates to its situation rather than standing alone. Interested in the material quality as well as the referential potential of these souvenirs, Gerber created a number of artworks that confront the idea of permeability in an artist's work and practice. When we see the souvenir as a remnant of Buren's exhibition, everything else, including Gerber's *Support*, becomes its ground. Conversely, when we consider Gerber's *Support* as an expression, the individual distinction of the souvenir is lost and it is seen as a part of the background of Gerber's work. The fluid exchange between contextual grounds in this work underscores the conditional quality of both artists' work and illuminates the role of the contextual ground in determining value. Gerber's work employs the souvenirs as a context for his own expression as well acknowledging both his and Buren's shared interest in an artwork acting as the ground against which other expressions are perceived.

Gerber further conflates differences between contextual grounds by bringing into play both the color of the light and the color of the room to suggest a further permeability in the elements of the exhibition, questioning both the implicit neutrality of the exhibition context and emphasizing the fluid quality of the relationship between expression and ground. For example, when we try to "see"

Support, a work that Gerber has installed in the rear of The Green Gallery near walls painted in an amber hue and bathed in an amber light, it's uncertain whether the color perceived is contained within the artwork or in the exhibition space. As we try to differentiate the *Support* from its situation, everything, 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 *Support*, 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 expression and its 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 city, 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.