

The Green Gallery

Gaylen Gerber

October 17 – November 15, 2008

The Green Gallery is pleased to present its first exhibition of works by Gaylen Gerber.

Gerber's practice is regularly situated in relation to the work of other artists. In this exhibition Gerber presents five new paintings realized in conjunction with four unidentified artists.

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 his exhibition with The Green Gallery, 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 been interested in 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 artworks as the figurative elements against this ground.

Gerber's paintings typically begin as grey monochrome canvases painted by Gerber. Gerber then gives these paintings to other artists to use as supports for their work. By contrast, Gerber structures this exhibition around a number of paintings acquired second-hand whose authorship is undetermined. The paintings all shared an important attribute, which is that each emphasized the

image of the painting as the artwork's primary expression. Taking these paintings as his starting point, Gerber repainted the face of each painting either white, to match the initial ground of the canvas, or his customary neutral gray color. In doing so, Gerber conflated differences between image and ground, questioning both the "neutrality" of the ground and emphasizing the conditional quality of the relationship between expression and ground.

Gerber draws further parallels between the contextual ground and the images that are differentiated against it in the installation of the exhibition. Original colors from the exhibited artworks, now painted over, are displaced onto the walls of the exhibition space, suggesting a porosity between elements of the exhibition. For example, when we try to "see" *Support*, a 20 x 24" heavily impastoed painting in which Gerber has obscured the painting's image by repainting it white, everything but the image, including the exhibition context that would normally become its background, remains in the foreground of our perception and understanding. Conversely, when we focus on the situation of the work, there is a suggestion that it is unclear exactly where the context ends and *Support* begins.

Recognizing the shifting relationships between the 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.

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