

69 / 96 is a dual exhibition, two shows presented in parallel to one another. The 69 part brings together art works from 1969 which have been chosen by the American curator, Bob

Nickas. The 96 part features works from 1996 chosen by the Swiss curators Fredi Fischli and Niels Olsen.

For Nickas, 1969 marks his earliest entry point into what has become a lifelong pursuit of the art of his time, just as for Fischli and Olsen, 1996 marks the beginning of their own engagement with art and artists. In 69/96, the three curators have entered an inter-generational dialog about exhibitions that is thus both personal and art historical, while also reminding us that art history must in some ways reflect the lived texture of life.

The task that Nickas has given himself is to go back to 1969 less bureaucratically, less curatorially if you will, and imagine himself as a collector who lived in that moment and surrounded himself with the art and ideas that animated and helped him to formulate his notions of art and the world. Along with this figure of the curator as fictional collector, we are reminded of the now-famous slogan of the late Seth Siegelaub: "Art is to change what you expect from it."

Many of the artists in the '69 show are represented by printed materials, by books, catalogs, cards, posters, documentary photographs, and projects for the magazine page. This is intended to emphasize the democratic nature of art-making and distribution that is of real consequence in defining that time, and to serve as a counterpoint to the mega-market aspect of our own. While many of the works from '69 are modest in their physicality, they are expansive in their scope.

The approach that Fischli and Olsen have taken, rather than serving a formal overview, is meant to account for that time by looking at a more select group of works in closer proximity. For them, the "'90s boom" is represented not as an issue unto itself but through the actual works themselves, and they engage that time from its post-Pop vantage and locality: they present a recreated site-specific work from the Michel Majerus exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel in 1996, a large canvas by the influential German painter Albert Oehlen, who now lives and works in the Appenzell, as well as an iconic shopping bag sculpture from Sylvie Fleury, especially produced for this exhibition.

Given our distance from 1969, this period would seem more firmly embedded in history than the mid-'90s, which are only now beginning to be examined curatorially. And yet both periods, particularly as they addressed here in parallel, are equally open to discussion within a wider context. For Fischli and Olsen, as for a generation of younger artists and curators, the story of art in the '90s

opens up now for reconsideration, too near to afford the kind of long view necessary to form a comprehensive picture, while at the same time, as a narrative that can begin to take shape within the proximity of the just passed, not so far that it appears beyond our grasp.

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