

Gaylen Gerber
January 15 – February 19, 2005
Daniel Hug Gallery
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The Daniel Hug Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Gaylen Gerber.

In this exhibition Gerber presents three works: a 13 x 29 foot *Backdrop* painting with a painting by Remy Zaugg installed on top of it, and two cooperative works realized with artists B. Wurtz and Adrian Schiess.

A little more than year ago in the gallery's inaugural exhibition, the gallery presented early works by Tom Friedman, Gaylen Gerber and Joe Scanlan in which Gerber's wall sized *Backdrop* painting acted as the contextual ground for Friedman's and Scanlan's artwork. For his current exhibition, Gerber re-presents exactly his large contextual painting, this time juxtaposed with the works of three different artists.

Gaylen Gerber's large *Backdrop* is a situation-specific painting; the first *Backdrop* was painted in 1993 and each subsequent painting is re-made to fit the architecture of the new exhibition situation. The painting, canvas over a wooden stretcher, is sized as closely as possible to the dimensions of the wall on which it is installed, allowing it to simultaneously exist as a discrete object in its own right and to also seem to become part of the background architecture of the gallery. Initially painted gray, in this situation the painting's face is repainted a white to match the gallery's walls. Remy Zaugg's painting *Not Here* from 1990-95 (one of a series of 27 identical unique paintings) is then hung on top of Gerber's *Backdrop*. Thus Gerber's painting functions as a background for this work of art, as well as for the other activities that take place in the gallery.

Gerber is 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. His *Backdrop* is positioned so that it will highlight these relationships by representing the often invisible normative aspects of visual language, suggested by its original "neutral" gray (now "neutral" white) color as well as by the casting of Zaugg's work as the figurative element to its ground.

Zaugg's work, which is used here by Gerber as a stand-in for his larger practice, addresses the structuring of a painting through perception. Zaugg's work defines itself by referring to things that are outside of the work and in doing so it illuminates the role

of the contextual ground in determining value. In this way Zaugg's work draws attention to the process of differentiation between value or meaning and the lack of it. In choosing to juxtapose his work with work by Remy Zaugg, Gerber is establishing a reflexive exchange between both artists' practices based on their shared interest in acknowledging the necessity of a ground for the perception of significance.

Gerber further explores these relationships in two additional works in the exhibition, *Support/Untitled #4*, 2003, realized with B. Wurtz and *Support/Sunset #2*, 2003, realized with Adrian Schiess. Like the *Backdrops*, works in Gerber's *Support* series begin as grey monochrome canvases painted by Gerber. Gerber then give these paintings to other artists to use as supports; in this case, Adrian Schiess and B. Wurtz realized their works directly on top of Gerber's paintings. These works question the complex relationships between expression and visual norms, especially in the way that each work consciously examines the role that the perception of a ground plays in the experience of differentiation and valuation.

Gaylen Gerber lives and works in Chicago. He has exhibited widely including recent solo exhibitions and cooperative projects at The Art Institute of Chicago, The Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, The Donald Young Gallery, Chicago, Galerie Susanna Kulli, Zurich and the FRAC-Bourgogne, Dijon.