

Wallspace

GAYLEN GERBER

October 26 - December 15, 2012

Opening reception: Thursday October 25st 6-8pm



Wallspace is pleased to present its second solo exhibition of work by Gaylen Gerber.

Gerber's practice focuses on the normative aspects of visual language: the way we, as part of a shared culture, accept certain forms, colors and situations as institutional, or we take them for granted as impartial common ground. These visual norms act as grounds for all other forms of expression and we use them to register difference and create meaning. This exhibition asks viewers to acknowledge but question the authority of the things we are looking at, often by putting their cultural, ideological, and religious connotations in jeopardy.

Gerber's work often acts as the contextual ground for the expression of other artists. In this exhibition, Gerber continues to examine the role of the contextual ground in the interpretation of art and to foreground the background or context as an expressive element itself. In doing so, he focuses attention on his use of other artists' expressions as a normative ground against which his own expression can be

recognized. In some instances Gerber's work is used as the ground for other artists' expression and in turn, he also uses other artists' work as the ground for his work.

As a result, everything in the exhibition is acknowledged as alternately both support and expression. This overt conflation of roles directly confronts the permeability between these distinctions. In *Support*, oil paint on *Optimal Model 121* by Joe Colombo, Gerber paints directly over the designer's expression. In making Colombo's pipe into a painting, Gerber echoes René Magritte's painting *La Trahison des Images*, which presents an image of a pipe captioned with the words "This is not a pipe". In both artists' work the use of a framing device is employed to contradict viewers' assessment that the item is a pipe. Gerber's deliberate reprise of Magritte's point that the image is not the object also draws special attention to history as a context that influences how we understand image and object alike.

In *Support/Untitled*, Heimo Zobernig paints directly on top of Gerber's *Support*, repainting its original gray color white (an alternate neutral) thus questioning the ground's claims to impartiality. In *Untitled (Gerber)* by Liz Deschenes, Deschenes acknowledges the conditional quality of Gerber's ground but in an entirely different way by photographing his *Backdrop* and representing it as an image, reiterating that image and object are not synonymous. In a number of other artworks in the exhibition, all titled *Support*, Gerber again reasserts the ground as an expression by directly painting on top of two versions of Lucio Fontana's *Concetto Spaziale Cratere* as well as a group of "traditional" African artifacts, dramatically contesting the idea of creation as an enduring presence and instead returning to the notion of creation as a performative act linked with destruction. In doing so, Gerber affirms the timelessness of this sentiment, which is shared by all the pieces of this exhibition.

Gaylen Gerber has exhibited widely. More recent solo exhibitions and cooperative projects include: Kunstverein Ruhr, Essen, Germany; Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois; Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, Bremen, Germany; Kunsthalle Bern, Bern, Switzerland; Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain de Bourgogne and Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, France among others.