

L'Atlantique

Magnus Andersen

16.11 - 15.12/2024

Notes on Magnus Andersen's Whiskas

For all the algorithms and computer learning we endure, everyday branded product design remains the most effective tool at separating consumers from their money. At the grocery store there aren't many items positioned toward the living without agency to shop for themselves, but they do exist. For those at the very beginning of their lives, those at the very end and the pets kept as company as they travel from one pole towards the other. The marketing of food to parents, dog parents and cat parents is a unique trick of advertisement, desire once removed and imagined affection received. Magnus Andersen's works have always straddled wide image languages, inhabiting their own perimetric area invoking the art historical, stock and aspirational lifestyles seen in both magazine editorials and advertising. His work over the past year derived from the ubiquitous packaging of a cat food brand inhabits all of these, but with a certain heightened activity and uncanniness due to his amplifying his source material's odd anthropomorphization. These cats stare into the viewer, a binary of constant passive aggression while equal to the haptic color fields they rest within. At home, the dilation of a cat's pupils signals either fear or excitement, here an ambiguous humanity. In his titling of these works he suggests their entrance into a high Beaux Arts tradition (*Whisk d'or nach Whiskas (Ocean Wild Wet)*, *Whiskas Atlantique (Mackerels League)*) and the conceptual literalness of more recent art (*Hard Chalk (Yellow and pink in jelly)*) - although neither completely and always with levity. Echoing Rosalind Krauss on the flags of Johns, we must question whether these are paintings of cats, packaging for cat food or a stealth other? Andersen's image constructions maintain personalities that "unlock emotional engagement", to use the term of the marketing team behind them. For hundreds of years any cat food sold came from a cart of old horse meat, or they might fend for themselves. In art we tend to do the same. Like packaged cat food, painting sells something that isn't a survival necessity. As with an owner at a store facing thousands of duplicated cats peering out at them, we tend to draw our own sustenance from involving ourselves within the pleasures of a visual other.

By Mitchell Anderson

1. Magnus Andersen

Whisk d'or nach Whiskas (Ocean Wild Wet),
2024

Flash vinyl and pigment on linen,
80,5 cm x 101 cm

2. Magnus Andersen

Whiskas Atlantique (Mackerels League),
2024

Flash vinyl and pigment on linen,
80,5 cm x 101 cm

3. Magnus Andersen

Hard Chalk (Yellow and pink in jelly),
2024

Flash vinyl and pigment on linen,
80,5 cm x 101 cm

