

Sherrie Levine

25 October - 21 December 2024

For her exhibition at Galerie Buchholz Sherrie Levine presents works made between 1983 and today, all of which are being exhibited for the first time.

After Piet Mondrian: 1-15, 1983 is a series of 15 color photographs of catalogue reproductions of abstract grid compositions by the Dutch artist. This piece is a seminal example of Levine's early works of appropriation from the context of her contemporaneous reproductions of paintings by eminent male artists. Levine's reproductions and recontextualizations, which are neither originals or copies, radically question the concept of originality. Her simultaneous engagement with and rejection of art historical traditions is reflected in a statement in which she describes herself as a "still life artist - with the book plate as [her] subject":

"I consider myself a still-life artist - with the bookplate as my subject. I want to make pictures that maintain their reference to the bookplates. And I want my pictures to have a material presence that is as interesting as, but quite different from the originals."¹

The work *After Piet Mondrian: 1-15*, 1983, has now itself become a pictorial source within Levine's oeuvre. Four decades later, the artist uses this work as an index for her paintings *After Piet Mondrian*, made in 2023 and 2024. Levine potentially produces three painterly renderings for each photograph, one in color, one in black-and-white and one in inverted colors. Two of these are shown in this exhibition.

The most recent works in the exhibition are two *After Francis Picabia* paintings. Here the artist takes an illustration from a Francis Picabia catalog dedicated to the artist's late work, in particular his *dot paintings*. In the exhibition there is both a color-version that corresponds to the original and an inverted version of the same painting.

In her reproductions, Levine affirms possible color and formal differences. Repetition and the creation of relations, both art-historical and within her own oeuvre, reveal the non-identical as the actual substance of Levine's work. Of greater interest than the attributions of original or copy or before and after are the differences (contextual, historical, material, etc.) that emerge in relation to one another and undermine the solidification in representations.

Nature Morte (still life) from 2023 consists of 12 found and framed panes of chicken wire glass. The work exists in an ambiguous area between sculpture and pictorial plane, and likewise between abstract painting and readymade. Here Levine's interest in fundamentally challenging the prevailing notion of a "real" work of art is evident, as is her interest in the physical and sensual qualities of objects. In Levine's words:

"I try to make art which celebrates doubt and uncertainty. Which provokes answers but doesn't give them. Which withholds absolute meaning by incorporating parasite meanings. Which suspends meaning while perpetually dispatching you toward interpretation, urging you beyond dogmatism, beyond doctrine, beyond ideology, beyond authority."²

At Fasanenstraße 31, Levine presents the collage-cycle *Covid*, 2023, consisting of 36 diptychs. The 72 images are excerpts from original pages of a design catalog of generic luxury furnishings that the artist received during the lockdown. In the seemingly repetitive illustrations of homogeneous furnishings we can find on closer inspection art catalogs that appear in these decors, circulating as reified signifiers within cultural representations of lifestyle and status. *Covid* thus manifests novel formal and conceptual articulations of issues that can be found in Levine's work since its beginning.

^{1&2} Levine, Sherrie, in: *October Files: Sherrie Levine*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2018, pp. 166, 167