

Acknowledgements

Susanne Ghez

Director

Gaylen Gerber

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The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois

The Renaissance Society Takes Pride in presenting the work of Gaylen Gerber, a Chicago artist whose work contributes substantially to the discourse about painting which is international in its breadth and historical in its depth. Few topics within the field of contemporary art are as intimidating as the ontology of painting. As Jan Avgikos' critical essay attests, Gerber's work situates itself within the very complex history of contemporary painting. This history has been a series of limits which have in turn defined the medium, making painting an historical act and by extension a philosophical one. Gerber's manner of repeatedly combining the monochrome and the still life questions the possibility of painting to achieve the kind of closure philosophy of it would predict, were it not for the very act of painting itself. Seeing never progresses to the blind faith associated with believing, but instead remains a continual perceiving.

The Renaissance Society has a long history of presenting challenging contemporary art. Since the move to its current space location in 1979, many artists have engaged the physical space of the gallery to advance and expand their artistic investigations. In the decade preceding the Gaylen Gerber exhibition, artists Daniel Buren, Jeff Wall, Günther Förg, Stephen Prina, Niele Toroni, Hirsch Perlman, Michael Asher and Maria Nordman realized exhibitions wherein the architecture of the space became an active component of the work. For this exhibition, Gerber directed the staff to completely wall off all but the first third of the space. He then installed his paintings, edge to edge, left to right, across the new 80 foot wall. Confrontational, assertive and unrelenting, the installation demanded the interaction of the viewer. Staging a physical interaction between the architectural layout of the space and the paintings. Gerber pushed forward his investigation of perception and truth, opening the door to future possibilities.

The Society is particularly indebted to Jan Avgikos for her essay which analyzes the philosophical and perceptual issues about the nature of painting presented by Gerber's work. Her collaboration with the artist in this endeavor provides us with privileged insight.

We are especially appreciative of the cooperation and generosity of the lender's:
Armand and Eva Bartos, New York; Jane Gekler, Los Angeles; Philip and Eugenia

Gerber , New York; Lisson Gallery, London; Galerie Rosemarie Schwarzwälder, Galerie nächst St. Stephan, Vienna; and C. Bradford Smith, Chicago.

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Finally, I would like to thank Gaylen, whose manner of working, not to mention his presence locally, has kept the most theoretical and rarefied issues surrounding painting from ever seeming too distant both geographically and conceptually.