

Conflict of Interest
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PRP, Dallas, TX
April 12 – May 3, 2025

“Conflict of Interest” extends Michael Mazurek’s ongoing investigation into meaning as it is staged, circulated, and absorbed within conditions of display. Working from a position both embedded in and skeptical of this apparatus, Mazurek mobilizes citation, appropriation, and material indeterminacy to expose how aesthetic value is constructed and performed. Appropriation unfolds in a deliberately fluid register—at once resistance, homage, and complicity—where influence is neither resolved nor disavowed, but sustained in tension.

A central work, “Bend Sinister,” borrows its title from both Kenneth Noland and Vladimir Nabokov, collapsing formalist abstraction with literary allegory. In Nabokov’s novel, reality is distorted by authoritarian logic; in this context, that distortion is translated into the visual field, where allusion itself becomes unreliable. The gesture toward Noland’s paintings—once emblematic of purity and autonomy—functions less as tribute than as displacement, re-situating his language within a framework that cannot support its original claims.

Underlying this strategy is an engagement with Cubism, where multiple perspectives destabilize any singular, authoritative view. This fragmentation is extended conceptually: images, allusions, and materials are layered, misaligned, and reconstituted, producing a field in which association remains visible but never fixed. The legacy of Minimalism lingers, not in its pursuit of reduction or purity, but as a historical position to be reoccupied and unsettled—its clarity complicated by citation, its autonomy interrupted by context.

Strategies indebted to Dada and Arte Povera, as well as the logic of the found object, are deployed through deliberately impoverished materials such as trash bags and cardboard. These gestures resist the fetish of refinement while simultaneously acknowledging their own participation in cycles of aesthetic recuperation. The use of “poor” materials does not exist outside the market but remains entangled with it, underscoring how quickly resistance resolves into style, and how acts of refusal are absorbed.

This tension becomes explicit in works that engage fashion as a parallel system of taste production. A painting invoking the visual language of Gucci stripes, alongside a fabricated Tom Ford coffee table book, points to the seasonal churn of desirability structuring both domains. Branding here functions as both subject and medium—

flattened, circulated, and emptied into image—where appropriation becomes indistinguishable from endorsement, and critique folds back into display.

At every level, the exhibition refuses the fantasy of exteriority. The works do not oppose the structures they engage but inhabit them to the point of near-erasure, adopting their codes only to introduce subtle misalignments. What emerges is a practice that does not resolve contradiction but encourages it: a mode of production in which influence, homage, and resistance remain intractably entangled, their distinctions rendered unstable within the very conditions that produce them.

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