

Nathan Hylden

Revue de presse
Press review

Minnesota artist returns from L.A. for austere, magnetic solo exhibit

Artist Nathan Hylden makes mystery out of the mundane.



CAYLON HACKWITH

Paintings of magnifying glasses on aluminum panels figure in Nathan Hylden's exhibition "Nearing on to Do" at Midway Contemporary Art.

Nathan Hylden's paintings are at once austere and magnetic.

His solo exhibition at Midway Contemporary Art in Minneapolis juxtaposes two main elements: 32 monochrome canvases painted in a gradient of blue-gray, and eight aluminum panels that portray a magnifying glass on top of what looks like cement painted with swaths of purplish-blue. The latter suggest a search for something else, but the satisfaction of "Nearing on to Do" (which ends July 1) is less about the work and more about the seemingly endless series of vantage points it offers to the viewer.

Lined up along the perimeter of the gallery, the canvases encircle the aluminum panels, mounted on temporary walls. Your view of the show depends on your position within the room, causing one to think about spatial dynamics. Half of the magnifying glass paintings appear faded, like a photographic negative of the others — think of the difference on Instagram between a Clarendon filter and a Nashville filter, with light brightened. Washed-out-looking pieces face others with starker contrast, creating another series of gradients.

The banal nature of the magnifying glass is a play on the object's actual purpose, which is to give people a "closer look." Here, there is no magnification at all, making the glass akin to the pipe in Rene Magritte's "Ceci N'est Pas Une Pipe."

The work reminds me of New York artist Cory Arcangel's "Photoshop Gradient" series for their seemingly ready-made quality and ability to take the mundane and recontextualize it within an art context.

Originally from Fergus Falls, Minn., and now living in Los Angeles, Hylden has had his work shown internationally. The meta-conceptual quality of this show is somewhat dry, and at times most concerned with its referential quality — a magnification of what is already happening, or what is already there.

In an essay for the artist, Jason E. Smith writes of the aluminum panels: "They are, in a sense, not there." He muses on the ephemeral nature of Hylden's paintings: "If the paintings that we came to see greet us only as ghosts, their time offstage lingers in the room, coming off the wall and off the stage to be with us, around us, and maybe even looking back at the surfaces where painting went missing."

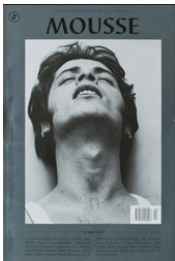
Perhaps it is the cinematic place where the paintings were created, or maybe it is the interplay of space that suggests a mysterious quality to these works.

I think of the shootout finale of Orson Welles' 1947 film "The Lady From Shanghai," which takes place in an amusement park funhouse.

Welles plays a man who has been framed for murder. He confronts the femme fatale (Rita Hayworth) and her jealous husband in a hall of mirrors. The couple fire their guns repeatedly into the mirrors until both are mortally wounded.

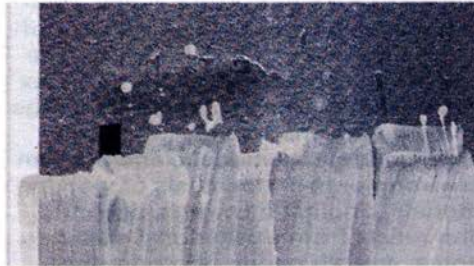
In the multiplicity of mirrors and reflections of images, it's impossible to see the "real," so it's necessary just to keep shooting at one — at what it might be — and leave the rest to chance.

In Hylden's exhibition, that same sense of chance is in operation, with the goal being not to understand what the paintings are of, or about, but to examine them from as many vantage points as possible. Because therein lies a way to "look closer" — by continuously looking again and again until you get the shot you like.



**FRANCE – PARIS
ART: CONCEPT**

Nathan Hylden
until July 26



After his shows: "Once I get started" and "Meanwhile", Los Angeles-based American artist, Nathan Hylden is holding his third personal exhibition entitled "More Over" at the Art:Concept gallery where he will present a new series of paintings on aluminium that inscribe his work within a questioning of time, but also within a reflection on the rationality involved in the creative act of setting up an exhibition; the two reflections working together within the artist's artistic conception. The gallery becomes a sort of receptacle, but is also promoted to the status of an art work in itself, transformed into a kind of total sculpture.

At first glance, Nathan Hylden's paintings almost seem ghostly. Superposed on top of one another during their creation, each one receives its allotted amount of paint, its own density and becomes a sequence, a decomposed set of images from the studio: here the shadow of a chair, there a ladder or a lamp. The starting point for each aluminium painting presented in the show is a photograph taken in his studio, often a photograph of the wall itself that will support the painting once it has been created. Silk-screened on aluminium plaques, these photographs become a sequential matrix, the plaques are layered over one another, interpenetrating to form the common thread of a narration, that of the creation of a painting that does not exist. From abstraction emerges a parallel reality in which visual temporality is overtaken by imaginative temporality. Imagination will have an effect on the piece, transforming it into a "strange trace of reality" and leading us to question the relationship between perception and image.

galerieartconcept.com



REVIEWS: INTERNATIONAL



Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2014.
acrylic on aluminum, 77½" x 57½".

NATHAN HYLDEN

ART: CONCEPT, PARIS
JUNE 14 - JULY 26

126

Nathan Hylden's solo exhibition entitled "More Over" presented a recent series of works silk-screened, painted, and spray-painted in a restricted palette of black, blue, and white on large aluminum panels. The nine pieces, all untitled and dated 2014, each depict the same banal view of a wall in Hylden's Los Angeles workspace. They began as sequential photographs of a broken rectangle of masking tape, marking where a vanished artwork once hung. Falling over the wall's uneven surface are shadows, in some paintings of a solitary chair and in others, of a camera and tripod. These objects shift position slightly from one image to the next, suggesting the passage of time.

To make the works, Hylden overlapped the aluminum panels with the silk-screened images. He then sprayed or swept paint over several panels at once, leaving behind evidence of his process in hard-edged voids and fading spatters. Clearly influenced by such artists as Andy Warhol and Christopher Wool, Hylden combines impersonal with gestural marks to produce surprisingly sensuous paintings. At the same time, despite the images' matter-of-fact simplicity, the series also permits a possible narrative to emerge, with the ghostly, three-legged tripod becoming a stand-in for the artist himself and the chair substituting for the viewer, insinuating his or herself into the picture.

LAURIE HURWITZ

LEFT: JENS ZIEHE/GEIZGABETH PEYTON/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND NEUGEHEIM/SCHNEIDER, BERLIN; RIGHT: FREDRIK NILSEN STUDIO/COURTESY THE ARTIST AND ARTCONCEPT, PARIS

Nathan Hylden

GALERIE ART: CONCEPT

13 rue des Arquebusiers

June 14–July 26

Nathan Hylden's latest suite of large-scale painted and silk-screened (though not always in that order) aluminum panels pays homage to the artist's own Los Angeles workspace. Joining a long line of artists who have treated their studios as subjects—from Vermeer to Matisse to Bruce Nauman, to name just a few—Hylden describes his creative environment in a limited palette of white, black, and blue on silvery light-reflective supports. Juxtaposing images of quotidian elements (wall, camera, chair) with fat, gestural brushstrokes and solid blocks of spray paint, Hylden's studio-scapes invite literal and metaphorical interpretation.

The nine works on view (all untitled, 2014) are based on photographs of a wall marked with masking tape right angles, suggesting the spot where an artwork once hung or will hang. This frame within a frame device, and the sense of collapsed time that it implies, remains constant as various ghostly objects and painterly flourishes are introduced throughout the series. In the first image the viewer encounters, a shadow of a tripod-mounted camera occupies the center of the masking-tape frame. The wispy three-legged form—a surrogate for the artist—reappears in slightly different locations across several panels before it is replaced by a shadow of a chair, implicitly inviting an outside observer—the viewer—to get comfortable and enter the scene.

Recalling Andy Warhol's 1978–79 "Shadows" series of handpainted silk screens based on photographs of the Factory, Hylden's body of work likewise challenges the seriality versus singularity dichotomy. In Hylden's studio, the practices of painting and silk-screening appear no more mutually exclusive than the presence of representational and abstract imagery.



Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2014, acrylic on aluminum, 77 1/2 x 57 1/2".

— *Mara Hoberman*

Promotion Des Français à L.A.

L'Institut français a monté un copieux programme à Los Angeles pour accentuer la visibilité de l'art hexagonal



Vue de l'exposition « LOST (in LA) », avec Vincent Ganivet (1^{er} plan), Vincent Lamouroux (plafond) et Michel Blazy (au fond). © Ph. : FLAX.



Nathan Hylden, *Barnsdall Window*, détail, 2012, vinyl, production France Los Angeles Exchange. © Photo : FLAX.

LOS ANGELES ■ Si la fascination exercée sur les artistes français par la Californie, et Los Angeles en particulier, ne faiblit pas, force est de constater qu'à l'étranger la création française a bien meilleure presse qu'il y a encore une quinzaine d'années. Quelques noms en vogue s'exportent désormais assez facilement, atteignant même de prestigieuses institutions tels le Hammer Museum, qui accueille à partir du 23 février Latifa Echakhch et deux mois plus tard Cyprien Gaillard.

« Parfois vue comme superficielle depuis l'Europe, Los Angeles développe des projets intellectuellement poussés et très précis, qui ont un intérêt dans la ville, en faisant notamment se rapprocher les réseaux artistiques et universitaires », ateste l'architecte François Perrin. Installé là depuis une dizaine d'années, il organise dans le cadre de « Dialogues. Art/Architecture. Paris/Los Angeles » des tables rondes et des projets d'architectes et d'artistes ayant une fibre architecturale, dans des maisons « iconiques » signées Rudolph Schindler ou Richard Neutra ; Xavier Veilhan est ainsi convié au mois d'avril prochain.

L'Institut français et les services culturels de l'ambassade de France aux États-Unis ont donc opportunément mis en place un programme réunissant une trentaine de collaborations. Se déroulant sur cinq mois, il est destiné à accentuer la visibilité des artistes de l'Hexagone dans la mégapole californienne, ceci en les confrontant à des artistes du cru. Intitulée « Ceci n'est pas... Art between France and Los Angeles », la manifestation met en réseau des structures de nature diverse, permettant ainsi une multiplication

des expériences et des formats... avec des bonheurs inégaux.

C'est à la Municipal Art Gallery à Barnsdall Park que se tient depuis début décembre le premier acte, avec l'exposition « LOST (in L.A.) » organisée par la Fondation FLAX (France Los Angeles Exchange) et mise en musique par Marc-Olivier Wahler. Inspirée par la série télévisuelle américaine du même nom, la proposition met en avant des allers-retours dans le temps ainsi que des jeux visuels faits d'apparitions et de disparitions. L'entreprise atteint ses objectifs de manière honnête, grâce notamment à quelques travaux *in situ* qui agissent efficacement sur les espaces. Une peinture optique de Nathan Hylden sur des vitres ouvrent sur un paysage qu'elle contribue à dissoudre, tandis qu'une structure en carton composée d'un assemblage d'octogones suspendue au plafond par Vincent Lamouroux redessine par ses ombres les espaces. On y retrouve également des figures oubliées de l'art californien, tel Robert Kinmont qui, en 1969, photographia ses obsessions pour le désert poussiéreux (*Favorite Dirt Roads*) avant de se retirer.

Dans les galeries aussi

Certaines galeries se sont prêtées au jeu de la rencontre. Ainsi Bernard Piffaretti expose-t-il chez Cherry and Martin, faisant la démonstration que sa peinture protocolaire mais néanmoins toujours fraîche peut rencontrer un bel écho dans la Cité des anges, où une jeune génération de peintres est toujours versée dans une abstraction énergique et colorée. À la François Ghebaly Gallery, Davide Balula réussit une belle mise en abyme de l'espace,

entièrement repeint d'un bleu « piscine ». Trois toiles blanches légèrement courbes y rappellent la singularité du Guggenheim Museum (New York) où des parois légèrement curvilignes accueillent des objets plans.

De jeune création il est également question dans deux accrochages organisés par Isabelle Le Normand dans les galeries Here is Elsewhere et ForYourArt. Tentée de s'établir à Los Angeles, la curatrice de Mains d'œuvres, à Saint-Ouen (Seine-

Saint-Denis), y propose « Ma nouvelle vie », des expositions avec un contenu – des œuvres –, mais dépourvues de propos. Si générale qu'apparaisse la volonté de convier de nombreux artistes des deux pays (Dominique Blais, Jean-Luc Blanc, Benoit Broisat, Jennifer Bolande ou John Divola) en se fondant sur des coups de cœur, il y a grand risque à le faire dans des propositions sans ossature. C'est particulièrement vrai à ForYourArt, où l'accrochage en

vrac et son trop-plein ne rend plus rien lisible. Peu lisible est de même la proposition de la critique d'art Marie de Brugerolle à LACE, qui prend – trop – appui sur le caractère énigmatique de l'œuvre de Guy de Cointet pour développer un parcours de travaux possiblement porteurs de plusieurs statuts. Leur hermétisme conjugué à un propos assez insondable concourt à ce que le visiteur s'y perde totalement.

Frédéric Bonnet

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À ROTTERDAM, « MINIMAL MYTH » OU LES GÉNÉALOGIES DU MINIMALISME

PAR CLÉMENT DIRIÉ

L'avantage des mythes, c'est qu'ils résultent d'une stratification d'interprétations et de mutations que chaque époque, culture et ère géographique adapte puis adopte. Voilà, sans conteste, l'arrière-pensée relativiste de l'exposition « Minimal Myth » que le Museum Boijmans van Beuningen de Rotterdam consacre au(x) minimalisme(s). Le musée y met en valeur sa collection minimale historique, tout en offrant une relecture du mouvement à l'aune de pratiques contemporaines. En réunissant des œuvres des années 1960 et 1970 des différentes scènes de l'art minimal et en les confrontant à une jeune génération d'artistes, Francesco Stocchi, conservateur pour l'art moderne et contemporain, défend cette thèse selon laquelle il n'y aurait pas un minimalisme – dominant, américain – mais bien plusieurs minimalismes, spécifiques, polysémiques.

Dans un espace aux nombreux points de fuite, où le regard peut embrasser Dan Flavin et Oscar Tuazon, Sol LeWitt et Raphael Hefti, l'exposition réunit d'abord les minimalismes historiques. Aux artistes cités du Minimal Art américain s'ajoutent notamment Carl Andre, Larry Bell et Robert Morris. Et pour la pluralité des points de vue, les Néerlandais Ben Akkerman, Ad Dekkers, Ger van Elk et Peter Struycken, les Italiens Nicola Carrino et Giuseppe Uncini, les Allemands Bernd & Hilla Becher et le Français François Morellet. De fait, une

telle association – rare dans une exposition consacrée au minimalisme – permet de découvrir des œuvres peu exposées comme la surprenante *Ombra di due parallelepidedi M33* (1975) de Giuseppe Uncini ou les tableaux en papier mâché de Jan Schoonhoven, membre du Groupe NUL. À côté de ces figures historiques, sont présentés treize « jeunes artistes » chez qui le commissaire a décelé une veine minimaliste, qu'elle s'exprime par les structures en grille et le recours à un vocabulaire issu de l'art minimal (Nick Oberthaler, Nicholas Knight, Marc Nagtzaam, Martijn Hendriks), la prise en compte de l'espace (Chris Cornish, Raphael Hefti, Kilian Rùthemann, Oscar Tuazon), le jeu sur la répétition et la sérialité (Nathan Hylden, Monika Sosnowska, Ned Vena) ou une réflexion sur des questions de structure (Marieta Chirulescu, Lydia Gifford).

Première constatation : l'exposition est un décor où les œuvres dialoguent sans souci de hiérarchie. En son cœur, elle propose ainsi un condensé de l'art minimal et de ses problématiques en mêlant Donald Judd, Mel Bochner et



Vue de l'exposition « Minimal Myth », Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam. De gauche à droite, œuvres de Monika Sosnowska, Donald Judd, Peter Struycken (sur le mur du fond), François Morellet, Carl Andre et Kilian Rùthemann. Photo : Lotte Stekelenburg.

Robert Mangold avec Nathan Hylden, Monika Sosnowska et Kilian Rùthemann. Ailleurs, l'idée de séquence est illustrée aussi bien par *Four Different Orders of Printing* (1972) de Sol LeWitt que par la série *Untitled* (2012) de Nathan Hylden ; des œuvres résultant de l'utilisation de couleurs ou de techniques dans des ordres différents. Autre constatation : « Minimal Myth » signifie au spectateur son importance, celle de son regard et de son corps, en remettant en cause la prétendue neutralité théorique du minimal pour en donner une vision plus émotionnelle.

De cette confrontation entre Europe et États-Unis, entre l'âge de la « révolution minimaliste » et de ses procédures historiques et celui de ses remises en jeu, « Minimal Myth » revendique un plaisir théorique et rétinien. Les jeunes artistes exposés n'y exploitent pas les codes du minimalisme mais démontrent comment, « plus de cinquante ans après la naissance du minimalisme, la nécessité d'une abstraction géométrique s'est déplacée vers une approche plus sensible ». Francesco Stocchi poursuit : « Alors que l'esthétique minimale ne remet plus en cause nos manières de voir mais décore nos vies, comment peut-elle répondre à son omniprésence dans la société ? ». Avec leurs intuitions et leurs recherches, les artistes contemporains proposent ici des éléments de réponse. ■

COMMISSAIRE
DE L'EXPOSITION : Francesco
Stocchi

MINIMAL MYTH, jusqu'au 16 septembre, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Museumpark 18-20, Rotterdam, Pays Bas, tél. +31 10 44 19 400, www.boijmans.nl



USA

Nathan Hylden Richard Telles Fine Art Los Angeles

The facetious joke – or is it a wry compliment? – about white monochrome paintings is that they hardly differentiate themselves from the walls they hang on. Despite choosing as his pictorial subject rectangles of blank white wall, Nathan Hylden worked hard to make the paintings in his exhibition 'So There's That' as unblank and as unneutral as possible. They are richly inflected by light and subtle colour, by movement and painterly incident. They are even covertly personalized: some of his paintings refer, in their compositions, to the artist's exact height. Their mutually interfering layers – photographic screen-prints over gestural brush marks, underneath graded fogs of spraypaint – mean that there is always a lot to look at. The traditional anti-aesthetic of unadorned blankness is dashing aestheticized.

A suite of seven untitled paintings (all works 2011) deploys many techniques already tested in the artist's earlier work. Despite being listed (and sold) separately, these works were made simultaneously, their sequential variation integral to their meaning. It is sad to imagine the group being split up. Seven photographs of Hylden's studio wall show the shadow of a stepladder moving, from image to image, across the frame (presumably the result of the setting sun, although the effect could easily have been faked). In the photographs, leftover masking tape corners show where one of the artist's previous pictures – cut to his exact height, as his paintings often are – was once fixed to the wall. Hylden transferred the photographs, at one-to-one scale, onto thin sheets of mirror-polished aluminium as half-tone screenprints, sandwiching them between a ground of wetly brushed zigzags and a topcoat of sprayed white acrylic so that it became almost impossible to separate, for instance, accidents of printing from imperfections in the original wall, or brush marks from photographed smears of wall-filler. Formalistic process and deft illusion are flattened to the point at which the paintings very nearly surrender to the blankness of the wall again.

Despite their conceptual and processual tightness, Hylden's paintings are luxuriantly easy on the eye. They are neat, secure in their conceits and confident of their affects. They provoke none of the discomfort one might feel in front of, for instance, a noisy Christopher Wool painting (an obvious influence on Hylden). They are awash with sunlight and calm.

A pair of ambitious new paintings, however, in Richard Telles's main gallery, admitted the artist into less-charted territory. These works, also untitled, are outwardly simpler than the series of seven paintings in the smaller rear space. Again, they show a patch of the artist's studio wall, photographed and converted into a half-tone pattern, overlaid on a brushy wet field of pearlescent gold.

What is astonishing about them, however, is their scale: each canvas measures almost three-and-a-half by six metres. Hanging side by side, they occupied most of the gallery's longest wall. The section of studio wall that they represent, however, lit from the side so as to accentuate its texture, must only be a few centimetres wide, and the half-tone image is blown up so that each dot is the size of a thumbnail. To help us gauge the scale of the magnification, Hylden has included in one photograph a screw, half sticking out of the wall and casting a long shadow diagonally across the canvas. In the second picture, it has been removed. It is, in a sense, a great big picture of nothing.

Increasing the size of a painting can be a cheap way of making it more impressive, but Hylden does not approach scale lightly. In the past he has favoured the matter-of-fact equivalence of picturing objects at life-size. Here the effect is to immerse the viewer in the crazy logic – and intermittent collapse – of an intricate system of representation. While the paintings are impossible to view at a distance (it is a narrow gallery) they are also dizzily hard to look at up close. The phenomenon suggests that the critical moment in all of Hylden's work – the other paintings in this exhibition included – is when he causes the viewer to zone out, to get lost on the threshold of conflicting representational registers. Hylden shows that sometimes even pictures of nothing can be too much.

Jonathan Griffin



Nathan Hylden
Untitled
2011
Half-tone screenprint
3.4 x 6.1 m

160 | frieze | March 2012

Art review: Nathan Hylden at Richard Telles Fine Art

November 3, 2011 | 7:00 pm



"So There's That," Nathan Hylden's third solo show at Richard Telles Fine Art, is a persuasive combination of self-assured and understated. Though clearly quite comfortable taking up space — the two paintings in the main room, installed side by side, stretch nearly the entire length of the gallery — the work has a quiet, meditative demeanor.

The subject matter is pointedly banal: The large paintings depict a vastly magnified portion of the wall in Hylden's studio, rendered in a pale, pixelated gray with a mysterious sheen of gold highlights. The only difference between the two canvases is the presence, in one, of a single screw. In the gallery's annex space — a much smaller storefront around the corner — one finds a cozy arrangement of paintings on aluminum that also depict the wall of Hylden's studio, rendered in a similarly arid gray through an indeterminable combination of brush strokes and screen printing. The only difference between the panels — and the only visual clue to the works' actual subject — is the shadow of a ladder that creeps across the wall over the course of the sequence.

It's not work that sounds particularly exciting on paper, but is — perhaps for that reason — all the more effective in person, with an absorbing presence that commands the space without raising its voice.

-- Holly Myers

Richard Telles Fine Art, 7380 Beverly Blvd., Los Angeles, (323) 965-5578, through Dec. 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays. www.tellesfineart.com

ARTISSIMA 15

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NATHAN HYLDEN

ART : CONCEPT, PARIS

Nato nel 1978 a Fergus Falls, MN.
Vive e lavora a Los Angeles, CA.

Born 1978 in Fergus Falls, MN.
Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.



Nathan Hylden presenta a Present Future sette nuovi lavori su carta che esprimono una sintesi tra il processo creativo e il mezzo artistico. Si tratta di una serie di opere in nero e argento realizzate con vernice spray su carta ritagliata, in un nuovo mezzo pittorico che si colloca tra pittura e collage - i due mezzi espressivi preferiti dall'artista. Questo nuovo formato nasce direttamente dal procedimento utilizzato dall'artista per tagliare il cartone che poi adopera come stencil per le sue tele verniciate a spray. Spesso Hylden dipinge più tele allo stesso tempo, a volte utilizzando una tela come stencil per un'altra tela. Così ha fatto per creare le sette opere in mostra a Present Future che sono tutte strettamente collegate tra loro. La serie ha origine da una pila di numerosi fogli di carta da cui l'artista ha poi ritagliato delle stecche in diagonale, in modo da dare la stessa forma a ogni opera. Nel dipingerli di nero e argento, Hylden ha spostato i fogli in modo da poter adoperare la carta sia come supporto pittorico sia come stencil - suggerendo così un circuito complesso tra serialità e simultaneità. (I lavori sono tutti double-face: l'artista decide quale dei due lati presentare solo nel momento di incorniciare l'opera). Per queste opere, come per i suoi lavori precedenti - collage, dipinti e sculture - Hylden ha utilizzato mezzi modesti, ma con finalità visive sorprendenti. Sebbene ogni singola opera sia un lavoro a sé stante, la serie forma nel suo insieme un efficace gioco di differenze e ripetizioni. I rilievi fini e le ombre minute create dal taglio diagonale producono in ogni opera una tensione vertiginosa tra la percezione ottica e quella tattile, e suggeriscono un nuovo terreno di ricerca. M.N.H.

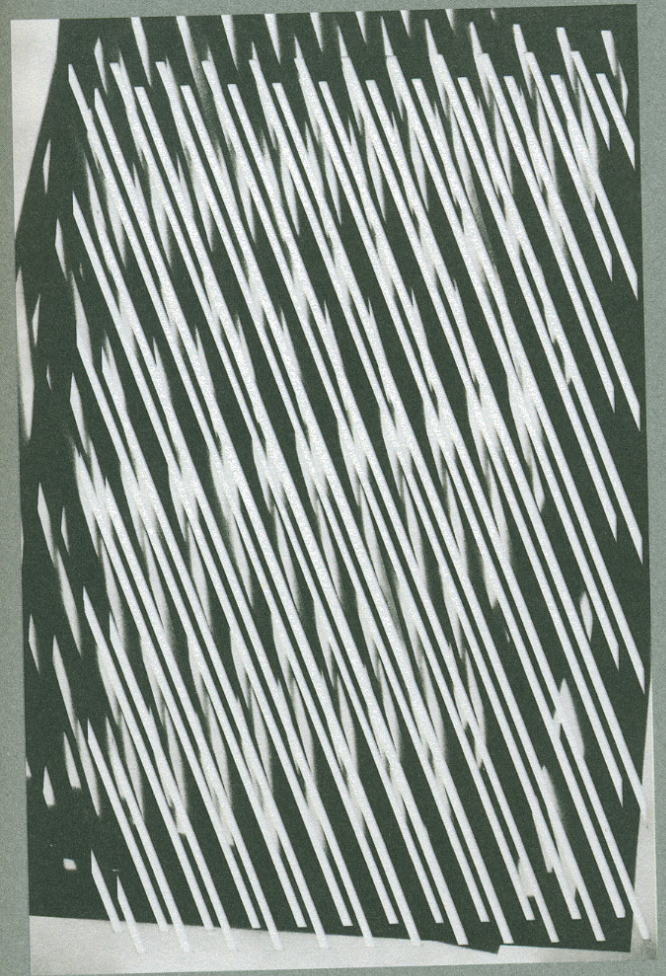
For Present Future, Nathan Hylden is exhibiting seven new works on paper that synthesize medium and making. The series, in black and silver spray paint on cut paper, marks a new format that lies between the artist's more familiar media - painting and collage. The new format emerges directly from Hylden's process, in which cardboard is cut and used as stencils for spray-painting canvases. Often, he has painted several canvases at the same time, sometimes even using one canvas as a stencil for another. Likewise, the seven new works here are inextricably linked in their construction. The series began with the artist stacking numerous sheets of paper, then cutting out diagonal slats from the whole stack - providing each work with the same pattern. He then began shifting the sheets while applying black and silver paint, with the paper acting at once as stencil and ground - suggesting a complex circuit between seriality and simultaneity. (Each work is also double-sided: Hylden decided which side was presented when getting the work framed). Like his previous paintings, collages, and sculptures, Hylden's works in Present Future employ strikingly modest means to visually arresting ends. While each work clearly stands on its own, the series productively plays a game of difference and repetition. With shallow relief and minute shadows resulting from the cut diagonals, these works each emphasize a particularly woozy tension between optic and haptic perception, suggesting a new area for further investigation. M.N.H.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2008 Johann König, Berlin
2007 *Starting To An End*, Misako & Rosen, Tokyo/*Just something else*, Art : Concept, Paris/*Again and as if to begin*, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2008 *Le Retour*, Nice & Fit Gallery, Berlin/Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago/*Zuordnungsprobleme*, Johann König, Berlin/*One morning I woke up very early*, Office Baroque Gallery, Antwerp
2007 Grieder Contemporary, Zürich/*Degree Zero*, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles/*L.A. Desire Part I*, Galerie Dennis Kimmerich, Düsseldorf (curator: Wilhelm Schürmann)/*Laying Bricks*, Wallspace Gallery, New York (curator: Michael Ned Holte)/*Material Photographs*, Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago (curator: Anthony Pearson)
2006 *TBILISI 3. LET'S STAY ALIVE TILL MONDAY*, Children National Gallery, Tbilisi, Georgie/*Pacing*, Marc Foxx, Los Angeles/*The Swan Is Very Peaceful...*, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles/*Pose and Sculpture*, curated by Daniel Baumann, Casey Kaplan Gallery, New York
2005 *Autonomy*, Foxy Production, New York



Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2008
paint on cut paper, polyptych of 7,40 x 30 inches each
Courtesy of Art : Concept, Paris. Photo credit: Fabrice Gousset

Berlin

Nathan Hylden

JOHANN KÖNIG

Dessauerstr. 6-7

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For his first solo show in Germany, the Los Angeles–based artist Nathan Hylden presents works that question the inherent structure of abstract painting through an evocation of Minimalist traditions. Hylden investigates the process of painting itself: The images are created through a range of reproductive and serial production methods that link all of the works here through common motifs. For example, Hylden stacked canvases with gold glazing into overlapping groups and then sprayed the exposed portions with neon-yellow paint, thereby introducing two vertical stripes into each composition. He then used a stencil, which he placed somewhat crookedly on the canvases, and black paint to create a sprayed-on grid structure that produces an irregular, shimmering rhythm that varies slightly in each image. This process makes each image both the starting point and the result of all the others. Although Hylden's method is evident in the resulting images, it produces appealing painterly effects, and therein rests the irony and severity of his works, as well as the importance and attraction of his approach. Hylden employs seriality to produce unique paintings, and while he disrupts categories such as authorship and expression in specific ways, he succeeds in finding a nonformal, individual language of form. His conceptual approach recalls the work of Wade Guyton and Anselm Reyle, as well as Deleuze's statement that "modern painting is invaded and besieged by photographs and clichés that are already lodged on the canvas before the painter even begins to work." Hylden's art is also a statement: He makes the idea of the singular work of art—something expected from painting above all other art forms—into a theme by employing purely formal means of differentiation.

Translated from German by Jane Brodie.

— Jens Asthoff



Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 67 1/2 x 47".

nathan HYLDEN



Exhibition view, Aperto and/or 21st Biennale, 2007 - Courtesy: Richard Miller Fine Art, Los Angeles

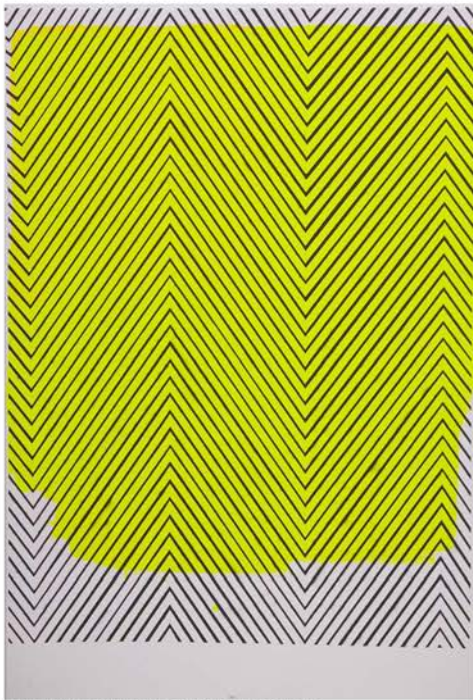
Cristina Travoglini

In teoria siamo tutti d'accordo. La pittura in Italia è oggetto di uno snobismo ingiustificato; è oppressa da pregiudizi fuori dal tempo; bisogna fare come a New York e a Londra, e ridarle il posto che merita, ecc. ecc. Tutto giusto. Poi però, di fronte a tanti, troppi quadri che si vedono in giro, ci passa la voglia. E torniamo a fare gli snob. Converrete allora che, quando troviamo un pittore che ci piace, è il caso di festeggiare. Vi presentiamo Nathan Hylden, americano del 1978, con un curriculum di mostre in gallerie interessanti (nell'ultimo scorcio del 2007, Richard Telles a L.A, art:concept a Parigi, Misako & Rosen a Tokyo) e un approccio alla tela austero, secco, che ha fatto scomodare addirittura paragoni con Frank Stella. Ah, la pittura. Che meraviglia.

Cominciamo dalla pittura. Medium tradizionalmente legato all'idea di unicità, nel tuo lavoro è utilizzata all'interno di una riflessione a proposito della serialità in arte. Come mai questa scelta?

Mi interessa molto la questione del dipinto come esemplare unico messo in relazione con un gruppo di dipinti o un'intera produzione. Faccio in modo che i miei lavori siano oggetti distinti e allo stesso tempo dipendano l'uno dall'altro. Un dipinto è un momento e allo stesso tempo è parte di una pratica che prosegue nel tempo.

Negli ultimi tempi è stato registrato un ritorno della pittura a un'idea classica di rappresentazione della realtà e composizione.



From left: Untitled, 2006 / Untitled, 2007 / Untitled, 2007 / Untitled, 2007 / Courtesy: Richard Serra Fine Art, Los Angeles



Penso ad artisti come John Currin, Christopher Orr, Elizabeth Peyton. Mi piacerebbe conoscere la tua opinione su questa tendenza. Tu sei dell'idea che la pittura tradizionale, figurativa, abbia espresso tutto il suo potenziale e sia quindi 'esaurita'?
Penso che potrebbe attivarsi una reazione contro il tipo di lavoro di cui parli, perché è considerato non riflessivo. Questo per quanto riguarda molta pittura figurativa. Ma, visto che hai citato la composizione, potrei dire che molti dipinti non figurativi sono basati sulla composizione. Credo che un'immagine dipinta sia una cosa davvero complicata a cui pensare. Ha a che fare con la tensione della materialità e la significazione.

Il tuo lavoro si basa su accumulo e ripetizione, e questo mi fa pensare al processo di copia e incolla a cui siamo stati abituati dal computer. Cosa pensi di quest'associazione? Che ruolo ha la tecnologia nel tuo lavoro?

I processi che uso sono generalmente piuttosto low-tech. Per realizzare le pitture a cui sto lavorando adesso, per esempio, semplicemente spruzzo la vernice con lo spray attraverso uno stencil in cartone. Uso materiali che ho a portata di mano, il tutto è molto semplice ed essenziale e io cerco di mantenere il processo il più diretto ed efficace possibile perché, se tutto va bene, quella efficacia passerà anche nel dipinto. L'effetto meccanico che scaturisce è pensato in opposizione alla qualità artigianale e gestuale del dipinto. Voglio passare attraverso il meccanico per fare qualcosa di gestuale.

Un'altra idea che non posso non associare con il processo di creazione dei tuoi lavori è appunto l'idea di un gesto ripetuto all'infinito. Da questa prospettiva, la tua pratica sembra seguire la strada aperta da una certa tradizione concettuale (che non a caso è stata spesso citata come uno dei riferimenti principali del tuo lavoro). Penso a Frank Stella, Daniel Buren, Niele Toroni. Ti senti affine a questi artisti e all'idea di arte di cui sono stati portatori?

Sì, apprezzo moltissimo il lavoro di questi artisti, in particolare quello che risale alla fine degli anni Cinquanta e ai primi Sessanta. Apprezzo soprattutto la qualità diretta del loro lavoro di quegli anni. Poi mi piace molto l'idea del gesto ripetuto all'infinito. Buren e Toroni hanno mantenuto una data struttura nel tempo, nonostante molte cose siano cambiate attorno a quei motivi ripetuti: colori che si aggiungevano, riedizioni fuori dalla tela e dentro lo spazio pubblico. Il lavoro di Stella invece è cambiato spesso, e a volte drammaticamente, negli ultimi quarant'anni. Per quanto riguarda me, non posso dire che ripeterò quello che sto facendo all'infinito; penso siano cose di cui si può parlare solo a posteriori. Ma di certo rimango sempre molto colpito da quegli artisti che sembrano capaci di fare la stessa cosa per sempre.

In ogni caso, quello che poi risulta dal processo di cui abbiamo parlato è un gruppo di dipinti che da un punto di vista estetico sembrano piuttosto associabili con artisti dall'approccio visivamente più 'aggressivo', da Andy Warhol a Steven Parrino a Christopher Wool. Di quest'altra connessione, che pensi?
Di nuovo hai citato tre artisti veramente grandi. E sì, penso che la connessione ci sia, almeno per quanto riguarda un certo modo, molto diretto, di dipingere. Il tutto si riduce, più che a trovare l'essenza, a fare qualcosa di molto diretto e intenso. Ed è un approccio che può essere in effetti considerato aggressivo.

Con questi ultimi artisti che ho citato condividi una predilezione per il bianco e nero, che si accompagna ad un uso molto originale del colore. Cosa puoi dirmi a questo proposito?
Ho usato colori fluorescenti e vernici metalliche per the affects straight from the can, e le righe nere perché producono sempre una sorta di vibrazione ottica. Mi piace pensare che questi effetti entrano in gioco un po' per caso, un po' per errore, come risultato automatico dei materiali usati o del processo seguito. È in questo senso che, come dicevo prima, voglio fare dipinti il

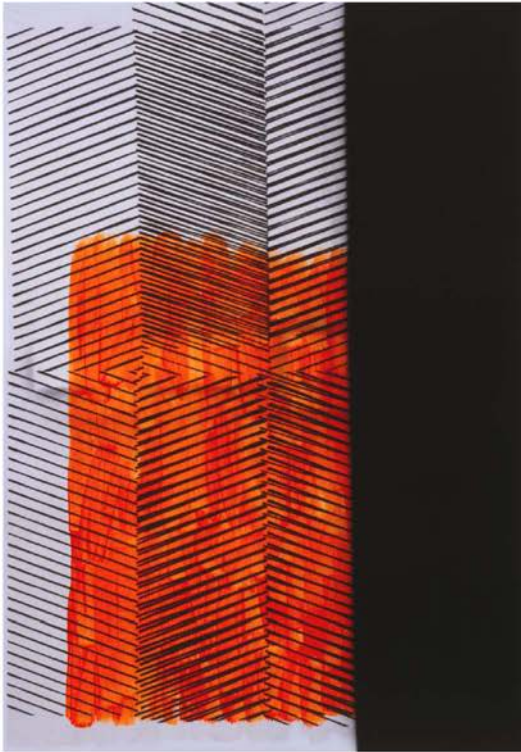
più chiari e diretti possibile, che siano palesemente fatti di pochi semplici elementi e che tuttavia nel complesso abbiano una loro complessità.

Come e perché è successo che hai inserito elementi figurativi nel tuo lavoro? Penso ad esempio ai lavori in cui hai usato delle fotografie, come For Not Working II.

Per me questi elementi funzionano come supplementi alle pitture. Non le intendo come chiavi di accesso al lavoro, rimangono a latere. In *For Not Working II*, l'immagine rappresenta uno studente che si è addormentato in classe. Mi piace tutto di quell'immagine, soprattutto la fantasia a righe della maglia del ragazzo e la disposizione dei banchi: è stampata sulla superficie del quadro in diverse direzioni, l'accumulo la decompone e fa emergere sul piano formale nuovi elementi. All'interno di un gruppo, produce una sorta di rottura ottica, una specie di salto visivo, un singhiozzo.

L'anno scorso Christopher Williams ha avuto una grande personale in Italia, per la precisione la mostra di chiusura della GAM di Bologna. In quell'occasione, come ovviamente sai, ha realizzato un interessante side-project: una radio indipendente, chiamata Radio Danièle, che portava avanti la strada aperta dalle numerosissime piccole radio (in cima alla lista Radio Alice) che popolavano l'etere durante gli anni della contestazione studentesca. Per Radio Danièle ha invitato, tra gli altri, anche te a concepire una playlist speciale. Cosa puoi dirmi di quell'esperienza? Qual è la tua relazione, personale ed artistica, con la musica?

È stato un piacere lavorare con Williams per quel progetto. Con John Kelsey, hanno messo in piedi una line up di artisti davvero incredibile, e tutto l'archivio era davvero pazzesco. Sono davvero felice di averne fatto parte. Molti degli artisti partecipanti avevano una relazione con la musica più stretta di me, però io



sono un grande ascoltatore, ascolto sempre qualcosa. Così, in quell'occasione, ho fatto una playlist semplice, composta da tre lunghe canzoni tratte da album che stavo ascoltando in quel periodo.

Qual è il tuo "best of 2007"?

Il meglio in assoluto è stata la collettiva *Strange Magic* alla galleria Luhring Augustine. La cosa che mi è piaciuta di più nella mostra è stata una serie di sei stampe di Eileen Quinlan intitolata *Smoke And Mirrors # 24a*. La serie era composta da sei stampe assolutamente identiche. Inizialmente non capivo se fosse un lavoro sulle differenze infinitesimali o qualcosa di simile; poi la didascalia mi ha rivelato che l'artista aveva semplicemente messo in mostra le sei edizioni dello stesso lavoro. Ogni fotografia prodotta in più edizioni è un singolo ma nasconde multipli che non si vedono; lei ha lavorato proprio su questo, complicando le cose e mostrando le sei edizioni una affianco all'altra.

Quali progetti hai per il futuro prossimo? E sulla lunga durata?

Al momento sto lavorando a un gruppo di dipinti, e vorrei cominciare a dedicarmi a un nuovo libro. Per il resto, intendo semplicemente proseguire la mia pratica quotidiana in studio.

Theoretically we all agree: painting in Italy is being unjustifiedly snobbed, it is weighed down by outdated prejudices, we should do the same of New York and London and return the deserved importance to it, etc. That's all correct. But in front of many, too many paintings seen around, we change our mind. And we start again to snob it.

This is why, when we find a painter that we really like, this is something to celebrate! We introduce you to Nathan Hylden, a 1978-born American artist with an impressive curriculum of exhibits in interesting galleries (Richard Telles in Los Angeles, art:concept in Paris, Misako & Rosen in Tokyo) and a severe, dry approach to painting that raised comparisons with no less than Frank Stella. God, painting, what a gorgeous thing!

Let's start from painting. It is a medium traditionally linked with the idea of uniqueness, but in your work it is used within a reflection of seriality in art. What can you tell me of this choice?

I am very interested in the problem of the individual painting in relation to a group of paintings or an entire body of work over time. I try to make things that are discrete objects but are just as well dependent on their immediate surroundings. An individual painting is a singular moment and part of a continuing practice at the same time.

In these times a reversion of painting to a classical idea of representation of reality and composition is being reported. I'm thinking of such artists as John Currin, Christopher Orr, and Elizabeth Peyton. I would like to know your opinion about this trend. Do you think that traditional, figurative painting has expressed all its potential and therefore is "exhausted"?

There may be a reaction against the kind of work you mention because it is seen as non-reflexive. I think that could be the case for a lot of representational paintings, but since you mentioned composition I might say that a lot of non-representational

paintings are merely compositions and can be just as anti-intellectual. I think a painted image is a very complicated thing to think about. It has to do with the tension of materiality and signification.

Your work is based on accumulation and repetition. It is a process that recalls the cut & paste to which we've been accustomed by the computer. What do you think? What role does technology have in your work?

The processes I tend to use are pretty low tech. For the paintings I am making right now I just spray-paint through a cardboard stencil. I use materials that I can have at hand, things are very basic, and I try to keep everything as efficient and direct as possible. Hopefully that efficiency is in the painting as well. Often the mechanically produced effect is regarded as an opposition to the hand or the gestural qualities of a painting. I want to go through the mechanical to make something gestural.

One more idea that I can't help but associate with the creative process of your works is the idea of an endlessly repeated gesture. From this perspective, your practice seems to be indebted to a certain conceptual tradition that not by random has been oftentimes mentioned as a main reference for your work. I'm thinking of Frank Stella, Daniel Buren, and Niele Toroni. Do you feel related to these artists and to the idea of art they brought with them?

Yes, I really appreciate the work of these artists, in particular the work from the late 50s and early 60s. I appreciate the directness of the work from that time. I always like the idea of the endless repeated gesture. In many ways Buren and Toroni have maintained a given structure over time, however a lot has changed around those repeated motifs—there have been additions of color and movements away from the rectangular canvas often into public space. Stella's work has changed

dramatically and often over the last forty years. But as for an endless repetition in my own work I can't say it will be endless. I guess that is one thing we can only know in hindsight, and for me the whole process is about a temporal question in that regard. I am always really impressed by artists who can seem to do the same thing forever.

What results from the above-mentioned process is a group of abstract paintings that seem associable with more 'aggressive' aesthetics shared by many artists from Andy Warhol through Steven Parrino to Christopher Wool. What do you think of this connection?

Again you mention three really great artists. I think the connection there may be an approach to making paintings in a very straight forward way; everything is reduced not so much to find a radical essence but to make something very direct and intense. This could be viewed as aggressive.

Something you share with this last tradition is the inclination towards black&white and an original use of color. I would like to know something more about this.

I have been using fluorescent color and some metallic paints for the affects straight from the can, and the black stripes always create an optical vibration. I like the idea that these affects happen by default or as an automatic result of the materials or process. It is in that sense that I would like to make a painting as obvious as possible, clearly made from a few simple elements,

but that hopefully becomes even more complex as a result.

How and why did figurative elements become occasionally part of your work? I'm thinking of the works where you used photographs, like *For Not Working II*.

For me, these elements function as supplements to the paintings, neither inside nor outside, but somehow as both. I don't intend for the images to be a key to the other works but just function along side. In *For Not Working II*, the image is of a student that has fallen asleep at school. I like everything about the image, particularly the striped pattern of the student's shirt and the arrangement of desks in the photo. In this case I screen-printed the image in various orientations. The accumulation breaks the image down and new formal elements occur, and across a group there is a kind of optical snap like a visual skip or a stutter.

Last year Christopher Williams had a large solo show in Italy, to be precise, the closing exhibition of the GAM in Bologna. On this occasion, as you know, he realized an interesting side-project, an independent radio called Radio Danièle which followed the path opened by the numerous small radios (at the head of the list, Radio Alice) that populated the ether during the years of the student protest. For Radio Danièle, he invited you to think up a playlist. What can you tell me about that experience? What's your personal and artistic relationship with music?

It was a pleasure to work with Williams on this. He and John Kelsey arranged an amazing line-up of artists and the entire

archive is incredible. I am really happy to have been a part of it. Many of the participants have a much closer relationship to music than I do, but I am always listening to something. At that moment I made a simple playlist of three long songs from the albums I was listening to.

What's your personal "best of 2007"?

The summer group show *Strange Magic* at Luhring Augustine. My favorite thing in the show was a group of six prints by Eileen Quinlan titled *Smoke And Mirrors # 24a*. With this group there were six identical prints. Initially it wasn't clear to me if the piece was about infinitesimal difference or was the result of different shutter releases toward the same still life, but the checklist revealed that she had exhibited the same work in its entire edition of six. Every editioned photograph is a singularity that is also a hidden depth in unseen multiples; she complicated that by showing the whole edition side by side.

What projects do you have for the short-term future? And what for the long-term?

I am working on a group of paintings right now, and I would like to start working on another book. Basically my plans are to simply continue working in my studio as a daily practice.



Exhibition view, *Just something else, 2007* - Courtesy: artsonceat, Paris - Photo: Fabrice Goussot

nathan hylden

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Paris / Parigi



Nathan Hylden *For Not Working II*, 2007, spray paint on silkscreened paper / pittura a spray su carta serigrafata, 76 x 56 cm each / ciascuna. Photo by / Foto di Fabrice Gousset.

In his first solo show in Paris, entitled *Just Something Else*, the American artist Nathan Hylden displays a series of works that perfectly highlight his exploration of the technique and temporality of the creative act. The technique that characterizes the works on exhibit, based upon accumulation and repetition, consists in applying thin layers of white and gold paint onto the canvas; on this surface the artist then places a rectangular silhouette pierced at the center, upon which he sprays black paint. What results is a negative image that cannot be

considered merely abstract—indeed, it makes the profile of the pierced silhouette stand out. This technique makes it possible to grasp the temporality of the work as it is executed, since the trace of time's passage remains on the canvas. Therefore, Hylden's is a process art that calls to mind the experimentation of Frank Stella and the minimalists as well as their interest in procedures that interact with the materials. The repetition of the same motif produces a tight relationship between the works, which seem to dialogue with one another.

Besides these canvases, the show includes a series of works on paper made by overlapping sheets and spraying silvery paint on the various layers. Afterwards, the sheets are moved around by the artist so as to give life to a new and different multiplication of the very work; the initial image is blurred, impossible to decipher, and therefore lacking its original meaning. The result, fruit of randomness, is a new universe of forms cut off from any context or narrative enquiry. The repetition and the layering that characterize these works remind also



Nathan Hylden *Just Something Else*, 2007. Installation view / Veduta dell'installazione. Photo by / Foto di Fabrice Gousset.

of the explorations of compositional arrangements by Rothko using rectangular color blocks, as well as his interest for the subjective experience of the encounter between the viewer and the undecipherable painted object, an encounter that offers a basis for defining that very object. Although Hylden's works can seem an echo of minimal and conceptual practice, they testify—at the same time—to the importance given by the artist to the haphazardness of gesture, as well as to his autonomy from the legacy of the past.

Nella sua prima personale a Parigi, intitolata *Just Something Else*, l'artista americano Nathan Hylden espone una serie di opere che mettono perfettamente in luce la sua ricerca sulla tecnica e sulla temporalità dell'atto creativo. La tecnica che caratterizza le opere in mostra, basata sull'accumulazione e sulla ripetizione, consiste nell'applicare sulla tela sottili

strati di pittura bianca e dorata; su questa superficie l'artista pone poi una sagoma rettangolare forata al centro, sulla quale spruzza della pittura nera. Ne risulta un'immagine negativa che non può essere considerata meramente astratta — si delinea infatti il profilo della sagoma forata. Questa tecnica permette di cogliere la temporalità dell'opera nella sua realizzazione, poiché la traccia del trascorrere del tempo rimane sulla tela. Quella di Hylden, dunque, è un'arte processuale che ricorda le sperimentazioni di Frank Stella e dei minimalisti, nonché il loro interesse per i procedimenti che interagiscono con i materiali. La ripetizione dello stesso motivo produce altresì una stretta relazione tra le opere, che sembrano dialogare tra di loro. Oltre a queste tele, la mostra include una serie di lavori su carta realizzati sovrapponendo alcuni fogli e spruzzando della vernice argentata sul cumulo ottenuto. In un secondo momento i fogli vengono spostati

dall'artista per dar vita a una nuova e differente moltiplicazione dell'opera stessa; l'immagine iniziale è offuscata, indecifrabile e quindi privata del suo significato originario. Il risultato, frutto della casualità, è un nuovo universo di forme avulse da qualsiasi contesto o indagine narrativa. La ripetizione e la stratificazione che caratterizzano queste opere ricordano anche le indagini sull'ordine compositivo dei blocchi rettangolari di colore compiute da Rothko, nonché il suo interesse per l'esperienza soggettiva dell'incontro tra l'osservatore e l'indescrivibile oggetto dipinto, un incontro che offre un fondamento per la definizione dell'oggetto stesso. Sebbene i lavori di Hylden possano apparire come un'eco dell'insegnamento minimal e concettuale, essi al contempo testimoniano l'importanza conferita dall'artista alla casualità del gesto e la sua autonomia rispetto all'eredità del passato.

Giorgia Losio

View of Nathan Hylden, "Again and as if to Begin," 2007, Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles. Photo: Fredrik Nilsen.



OPENINGS

Michael Ned Holte on

Nathan Hylden

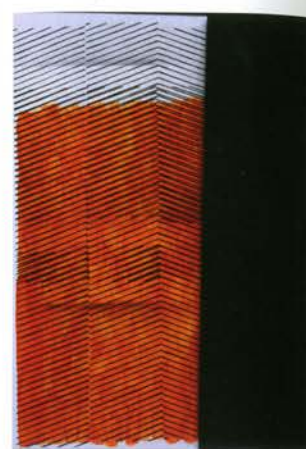
FOR HIS DEBUT SOLO EXHIBITION at Richard Telles Fine Art in Los Angeles this past spring, the LA-based artist Nathan Hylden situated a tidy stack of 11 x 8½-inch, perfect-bound and editioned books on the floor by the gallery's entryway. Free for the taking (and quickly snapped up), each volume was filled with nearly cinematic sequences of evenly spaced, if slightly wonky, fields of black diagonals appearing on lengthy passages of black, then white, paper—with individual lines

becoming off-kilter, occasionally overlapping to the point of visual obliteration, as one flipped through the pages. In fact, the interior of the book might have looked like a printer's error—devoid of text and outfitted with a plain, matte-black cover—if it hadn't paired so perfectly with a small (29 x 23-inch) painting of black diagonals atop a black ground hanging directly above the ephemeral stack. The lines on this near monochrome's surface were visible only from certain angles, and the sustained attention demanded by the painting matched not only the formal, stenciled design of the book's sequences, but also those passages' implications for our experience of time. And so viewers became aware of Hylden's staging of a spatial exegesis—on repetition, on mirroring, on order and disorder—that would, as his exhibition unfolded, even propose a complex model of temporality with its articulation of a circuit between seriality and simultaneity.

Indeed, the show's title, "Again and as if to Begin," seemed only appropriate as two more black-on-black canvases were placed by Hylden in the main gallery, reiterating the monochrome in the entry and creating, in turn, a sense of the



From left: Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2007, collage and paint on paper, nine framed parts, each 11 x 8½". Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2007, acrylic on linen, 94 x 67". Nathan Hylden, *Untitled*, 2007, acrylic on linen, 67 x 47". Nathan Hylden, *For Not Working II*, 2007, polyptych, spray paint on silk-screened paper, each 30 x 20".

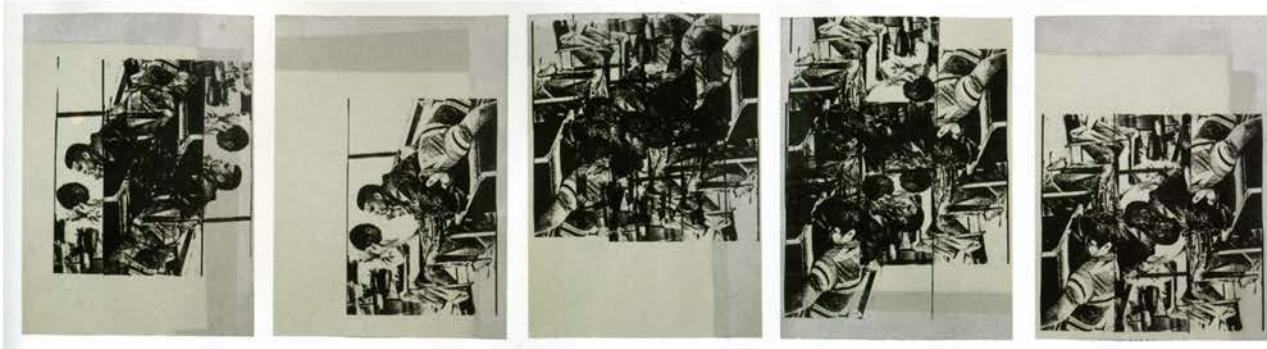


exhibition's having multiple thresholds. But Hylden created this impression most clearly by installing three visually hectic, untitled, roughly six-by-four-foot canvases amid two highly polished aluminum and painted sculptures. For these works, the artist employed a strategic seriality, making a number of similar canvases using the same materials and techniques. Each of the three paintings featured a stenciled thicket of black lines crisscrossing a field of bright orange brushwork and white gesso, with a pitch-black area taking over the right third of the support. These black voids, somewhat recalling unexposed film (not to mention the smaller paintings), are inextricably linked, since Hylden overlaid the canvases on the ground and used them as stencils for one another while spraying the black paint. His two sculptures—each comprising a pair of folded aluminum planes standing three feet high—result from a similar tactic, in which one angled plane is die-cut and then used as a stencil for its partner before being pulled apart to reveal this indexical relationship. With their high-polished, reflective surfaces, both sculptures literally mirrored the paintings on the walls, adding to the controlled visual delirium of Hylden's installation while also implicating the viewer in it.

One immediate effect was to exacerbate a demand for sustained attention that again was issued by Hylden's subtly layered, lush surfaces, which were surprisingly created using spray paint and stencils. I say "surprisingly" because, contrary to expectations, these media are not employed by the artist to produce any graphic crispness, which one typically associates with images intended to be read quickly (whether construction signage or a tagger's brand identity), but are, rather, clearly used to agitate the eye. Hylden's paintings then produce a paradoxical slippage between what is anticipated from certain materials or

procedures and what he actually does with them: Fluorescent orange paint, typically sought for its flat, Pop sheen, is here applied thinly in loose brushstrokes to produce a washy field beneath the diagonal lines—sometimes gently overlapping, sometimes crisscrossing—of sprayed black acrylic.

Still, taken individually, Hylden's paintings can flirt with slightness—a charge I've occasionally heard whispered about these works, and which perhaps results as much from their expedient realization as from the amount of visual information they feature. But what would "too slight" look like in the present moment? Rather than getting hung up on such a rhetorical question, Hylden's canvases confidently resonate with a trajectory of "cool," "reductive," or seemingly impersonal painting. His works variously evoke the repetitive structures of Stella's "Black Paintings" and Warhol's silk screens, and the reflexive, almost-compulsive signature gestures—identical vertical stripes, patterns of brush "prints," etc.—of BMPT (Buren, Mosset, Parmentier, Toroni) and Martin Barre. With his limited materials and palette, Hylden also looks to the punk-inflected efforts of Christopher Wool and Steven Parrino from the 1980s and '90s—to say nothing of the seemingly "offhand" efforts of Richard Hawkins and Michael Krebber. Significantly, Hylden spent a summer working with Krebber, and studied at Art Center College of Design in Pasadena, California, with both Hawkins and Christopher Williams, whose poker-faced combination of seriousness and humor seems influential here. One might easily discern this disposition in a recent group of five silk-screen monoprints by Hylden, in which he repeats and overlaps a found image of bored students—one, wearing a striped shirt, is facedown on his desk. Clearly, the artist is willing to poke fun at the risk inherent in any repetitive strategy, including his own.



This past summer Hylden produced another series of canvases in which a finite group of building blocks—a brushy, metallic gray ground; a network of canted, overlapping fluorescent orange rectangular “frames”; and dense blocks of thin black hatch marks—was used to create a range of surfaces from sparse to overloaded. Seen in conjunction, the paintings put into play the twin poles of *just-enough* and *too-much*. But what particularly seems at stake for Hylden is a desire to (re-)locate the physicality of the body and (per his visual joke above) his own all-too-human decision making within a painting practice indebted to, if not governed by, the inhuman process of mechanical reproduction. It’s worthwhile in this regard to note that the artist’s stencils are handmade from cardboard, which eventually becomes warped and “imperfect” from repeated use: A clash of the haptic and optic consistently threads through Hylden’s work. To this end, the larger paintings from this latest series are made to be installed low, with the bottom edge of the stretcher just six inches off the floor, emphasizing a relationship between the work—whose vertical dimension exactly corresponded to the artist’s height—and the viewer’s body. And with the repetitive strategies and use of physical gestures and crude devices that mimic mechanical reproduction—and, in the case of the books, use that methodology—Hylden’s works suggested that the human ambition to construct something is always inflected with the possibility of its eventual collapse, regardless of the apparatus used.

It’s the kind of intimation one also found at Telles in a grid of nine framed collages on gray paper, which combined variable amounts of stenciled silver spray paint, black paper triangles, and carefully chosen newspaper images of architectural construction and ruin. Nearly hidden within these pieces was a mirrored pair of newspaper images featuring a motley construction crew that included Spider-Man, Curious George, and Frankenstein in matching hard hats, erecting a wood stud-frame wall for Habitat for Humanity. The picture is goofy and ambiguous, but nonetheless offered a clue for understanding the paintings and sculpture by pointing toward a comic confusion of building and demolition—to the point that any notion of “progress” would seem called into question. One might usefully consider Robert Smithson’s “Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” (1967), in which site-seeing is described as viewing “. . . ruins in reverse, that is—all the new construction that would eventually be built. This is the opposite of the ‘romantic ruin’ because the buildings don’t fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they

are built.” The sprayed networks of black paint on Hylden’s paintings rhymed visually with the repetitive and overlapping lines of the scaffolding, trusses, and stud walls found in his collages; reiterating a threshold between order and disorder, each painting presents itself as an example from a nearly endless series of possible permutations of building and unbuilding with these chosen elements. In this sense, the objects in Hylden’s exhibition rose into ruin and thereby resisted—if not rejected—finality, pragmatically offering solutions for intensifying and prolonging the present while deferring the future.

For his most recent show at Art: Concept in Paris, given the self-deprecating title “Just Something Else,” Hylden introduced three large canvases at precisely double the size of his earlier black-and-orange paintings (though, one should note, the width of their supports equals the artist’s height and reach).

What particularly seems at stake for Hylden is a desire to (re-)locate the physicality of the body and his own all-too-human decision making within a painting practice indebted to, if not governed by, the inhuman process of mechanical reproduction.

With their stenciled blocks of solid black—which are fuzzy at the perimeters, repeating and overlapping over a washy ground of translucent, iridescent gold—the works produce subtly complex images that recall strips of celluloid film even while disrupting figure-ground relationships. The luminous squares and rectangles—remnants of what should be the backgrounds of these paintings—seem to float atop the black surface marks. Still, Hylden seems less interested in optical agitation than in the sheer variety of interrelated, accumulated images he is able to produce through an economy of means: He again employed few materials and undertook the compulsive process of painting while dragging large stencils across canvas as a mode of reproduction. Eschewing progress in favor of intensifying a sense of the present, Hylden continues to find solace in “building” not as a noun but as a verb, insisting that his body of work is always under construction. □

MICHAEL NED HOLTE IS A WRITER BASED IN LOS ANGELES.

Nathan Hylden BY ITZA VILABOY

Richard Telles Fine Art, Los Angeles CA February 10 · March 10, 2007

"Again and as if to begin," Nathan Hylden's debut show at Richard Telles, displays a combination of untitled objects ranging from paintings, collage, sculpture, and ephemera, altogether unified by a tightly knit set of formal preoccupations and themes. Despite the limited palette—black, white, and neon orange—Hylden's skillful yet playful variations do not feel restricted or monotonous. What emerges from observing the paintings in close succession, say, is a marked departure from paint as such toward the painting process itself, in which the brushstroke has now devolved into overlapping zones of density. In one set—the black-on-black acrylics on linen—the surface facture has actually been systematically sculpted out to form a reflective sheen, in muted contrast to the more even finish of their underlying supportive layers.

Although this layering effect might suggest a rather conceptual approach to painting, here it appears to have more to do with the gesture of revealing an absent concept behind every conceptual/retinal form of recurrent patterning. In fact, Hylden almost flaunts

the fullness of this empty gesture, adroitly negotiating hard-edged borders, odd canvas threads, and angled convergences of line. Further to this conceit are nine collage and painted works on paper arranged in even rows of three. These black-framed newspaper cutouts, which depict an ongoing construction site where several figures can be seen erecting the wooden skeletal frame of a house, are invariably sliced through with recurring vectors or strokes, causing interference patterns less tessellated than just indiscernibly there. It slyly insinuates the very act of collage as a form of nonrepresentational abstraction.

The next, somewhat larger and intense cluster of paintings alters viewer perception by turning eye movements into gestures themselves. The shallow-to-extreme-orange hues fill out the canvas volume through columnar arrangements of hatching, all intermeshed by the degree to which they overlap or don't. It is as if painting can no longer be beheld, beholden to, or kept at a distance in the traditional pictorial sense, having now transmuted into a pure distance of always emergent, eye-catching forms. Just as one should view the black paintings at an angle to grasp their precise edge-to-edge placement, so the same goes for the larger set, but with a minor (and major) qualification. For, looking back from the opposite end of the gallery, what in fact appear as smudgy, broken-up and twisted outlines of these colorful shapes are but mere reflections in two polished aluminum sculptures diagonally placed across the middle of the room. Looking back toward the gallery entrance, however, only two white folded screens remain, forging a discreet if effective break in visual perambulation. These vector-like monochromes lend substance to the shadowy hallway, momentarily blanketing the installation in a wall of whiteness.



ARTFORUM

Untitled group exhibition

RICHARD TELLES FINE ART
7380 Beverly Boulevard
September 9–October 14



Roy Arden, *Solar*, 2005.

Though September typically denotes an end to summer's onslaught of emerging-artist group exhibitions, Richard Telles bucks convention to introduce his gallery artists at the start of each new season. As in Septembers past, Lecia Dole-Recio, Lisa Lapinski, Thomas Eggerer, and Richard Hawkins are featured, this year alongside Ginny Bishton, Roy Arden, and Nate Hylden. Characterized by forward-thinking abstraction and subtle figuration, the showcased paintings, collages, silk screens, and photographs have little to do with any overriding theme, but rather benefit from the understated, unexpected exchanges that occur between individual works. The tidy repeating circular planes of Ginny Bishton's photo collage resonate in the pleasantly messy circles of Lecia Dole-Recio's cardboard and paint composition (both works *Untitled*, 2006). Dole-Recio's striking brand of abstraction (crafty layers and constructed shadows) stands out even in this small, papery piece. In Richard Hawkins's *The Drunken Sailor*, 2003, thick patches of fleshy oil paint stroke a finger-size hole in the surface of the canvas. Hawkins's painting gives vigor to Roy Arden's otherwise dry photograph of an unkempt hydrangea bush, the punctum of both works becoming erotic sites. Not all of the works on view so readily communicate their relationships, but most possess broad appeal in and of themselves.

—Catherine Taft

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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Chelsea Is a Battlefield: Galleries Muster Groups

By ROBERTA SMITH

IN case you haven't noticed, the summer group show wars are raging in Chelsea. Over the last few years they have become something of an annual rite. Starting in late June and continuing through August, the solo shows drop off and the group shows — four or more artists — proliferate. The densely packed yet oddly discrete parallel universes in which galleries exist for most of the year lose some of their definition.

After all, proximity breeds a lot of things, including competitiveness, as well as pressures that need venting, and that seems to be what summer in Chelsea is for. It is open season for cool hunting and power gathering. Hipness prevails over blue-chipness.

Galleries let off steam, kick up their heels, make plays for new artists or higher profiles, or try to improve their standing. Their inner lives are more fully visible, not the least because group shows involve more decisions than the solo kind. There are more artists and more art and, frequently, outside loans and curators, all multiplied by the 100-plus group shows Chelsea has fostered this summer. Even a small sampling of these shows, as here, gives some indication of the tremendous amount of data about current art and the scene that is being released into the atmosphere.

A Few Signposts

The exhibition titles alone can trigger a kind of semiotic delirium, and in many cases are a show's main cleverness. Some are deliber-

Dr. Spock
Dr. Zhivago
Dr. John
Dr. Feelgood
Dr. Jekyll
Dr. J
Dr. Dolittle
Dr. Roberts
Dr. Phil
Dr. Gachet
Dr. Who
Dr. Seuss
Dr. Ruth
Dr. Strangelove
Dr. Evil
Dr. Watson

Nicholas Roberts for The New York Times

"List #3," part of Karl Haendel's piece "Post-War and Contemporary Group" at Cohan and Leslie.

ately provocative: "Better Than Sex, Better Than Disneyland" at Ramis Barquet, "Binge and Purge" at Magnan Projects "Photography Is Not an Art!" at Alan Klotz and "Montezuma's Revenge" at Nicole Klagsbrun. Some form odd chains of words and ideas: "Men" at I-20, "Men and Materials" at Jeff Bailey, "Materiality" at Kravets Wehby, "Material Abuse" at Caren Golden.

Others may fill gaps in your liberal arts education: Wallace Stevens's Whitmanesque ode to summer has provided the title for "A Rabbit as King of the Ghosts," a

Continued on Page 31

Continued From Weekend Page 25

group show at Mitchell-Innes & Nash. Organized by the photographers Justine Kurland and Dan Torop, it elegantly and peripatetically spans 140 years of photography: the rabbit pulled out of the 19th-century hat. And there is always a high-water mark of pretentiousness. This year's is the title of the Bortolami Dayan show, "War on 45/My Mirrors Are Painted Black (For You)."

Other Attributes

Titles aside, the first key to the import of a summer group show is its organizer. Is it an invited guest (curator, critic, artist, dealer) with a reputation of a certain weight and possibly a foreign passport? Or is it the gallery's owner or junior staff?

Equally important are the artists selected: Are they young and hot — like a fishing expedition or football draft — or are the generations mixed so as to reflect flatteringly in all directions? And how many artists in the show are already represented by the host gallery? Too many and it can seem overly promotional. It's usually a judgment call. A borderline example: In Cheim & Read's marvelous show about Chaim Soutine and modern art, 5 of the 20 artists whose work share the walls with the Soutines are represented by the gallery.

When the guest is an artist, an important article, a courtship may be under way, or complete. For example the exhibition organized by Charles Ray at Matthew Marks is the first public sign that Mr. Ray, the prominent American sculptor, has joined this prestigious gallery. That the show includes loans from the Museum of Modern Art (a tall Giacometti figure) and the Whitney (an important early Mark di Suvero) reflects Mr. Marks's clout, the museums' interest in Mr. Ray, or both. But let's move on to other cups of tea leaves.

An Aesthetic Divide

Chelsea's group-show summer fray can evoke a farmyard with a surplus of roosters. This was especially the case last summer when male artists and curators seemed to dominate, along with a plethora of Conceptually-based black-on-black appropriation art. At the time the term "boys in black" came to mind, and to a certain extent they're back.

This summer's crop of shows confirms that an opposition present in art since the mid 1970's is still in force, if a bit out of whack. In the 1980's appropriation art and Neo-Expressionist painting were fairly evenly matched, which made for a really intriguing argument. These days Conceptually-based appropriation art — involving photographs, found objects, text, shavie meaning and usually out much in the way of form — has taken over some of Chelsea's sleeker galleries. While art that is more robust, colorful, physical and sometimes painterly tends to be found in less prominent shows, like "Diamonds Cut Diamonds" at *Here*, where she works of free young sculptors crosses a material flamboyance that is curtailed by a banal sense of realism.

This duality is not absolute, nor is one side better than the other, but the lack of balance seems unhealthy. (Note to artists ransacking the 80's for heroes: More David Salle, less Robert Longo.) Yet several shows suggest that some artists and curators seem determined to find new ways to operate in the gap between the overly intellectual and the simplistically physical. The shows considered from here on progress from more to less severe, from cerebral to visual, revealing an increasing give and take between concept and objects, nontyping and painting, form and the fear of it.

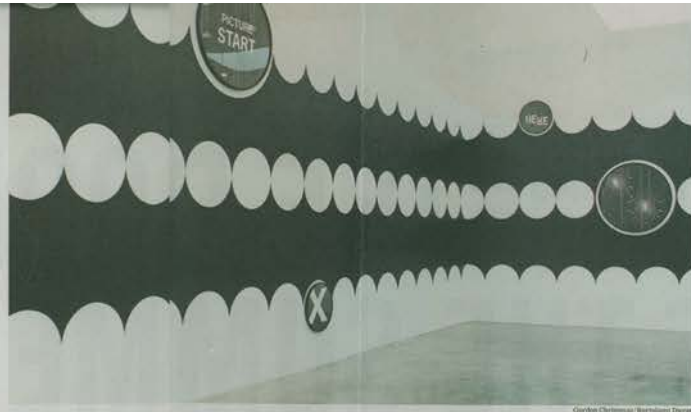
On the Severe Side

Last year Gladstone Gallery was boys-in-black central, with "Bride Freezes Before Road," a flashy group show organized by the freelance critic Neville Wakefield that held many clues to this year's Whitney Biennial. Now that sort of severity is concentrated in "War on 45" at Bortolami Dayan and feels very, well, last summer's. Organized by the artist Banks Violette (who was in Mr. Wakefield's show), it evokes stylishly dark, punked-out graphic design. That which isn't obvious requires far too much explaining, in particular a slightly sinister hanging sculpture by Herwig Weiser involving a fat, dark red acrylic tube, spinning circles of oil sounds transmitted from outer space and some incredibly delicate machinery.

The severity lessens in an untitled show of four (also male) artists at Cohan & Leslie, organized by the gallery's owner, Leslie Cohan and Andrew Leslie, along with an impressive if rather Longosque wall of drawings by Karl Haendel, titled "Post-War and Contemporary Group," as well as works by Ryan Gander and Pierre Bismuth. The show includes one of the season's standouts: T. Kelly Mason's compact yet evocative sound-video installation "Rain, Rain, Rain/Up In Smoke and Down the Drain."

Shredded in packing blankets, its heart is a shadowy 26-minute video loop in which terse, expertly lettered phrases emerge and fade, obliterated by falling rain suggestive of eroding pixels. Poetic musings alternate with accusations ("Hippies Betrayed Us"), avant-garde history ("Victory Over the Sun") and instruction ("Stop away from the text and litter"). Delicate sounds of drums, a guitar, wind, rain and surf culminate in a meandering song: "Black days are coming, black days are here." Occasional references to flatness seem to hold the key to the other works here, which recycle two-dimensional artifacts — images, texts or drawings — into new aggregates through re-drawing or rephotographing or, in one instance, folding.

Nonflatness trumps flatness in "Pose and Sculpture," at Casey Kaplan. Organized by the Swiss critic and independent curator Daniel Baumann, with 12 artists split evenly between Europeans and Americans, this is an anorexic show. A piece by Helmut Zobernig involves two bare mannequins and a plain wood structure that might be awaiting Thomas Hirschhorn's camouflage and duct tape. But the works by Isa Genzken, Rachel



Philippe Decrauzat's "Komakirino," featured in "War on 45/My Mirrors Are Painted Black (For You)" at Bortolami Dayan.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

Chelsea, Battlefield for Galleries



"Fountains," the nine-artist show at D'Amelio Terras, includes the tie-dyed work of Michael Phelan and a fountain by Jonah Freeman.

Harrison, Andrzej Wokos, Justin Benal and Nathan Hylden in particular create a lively exchange on space, dimensionality and color. Julian Götte and Lis Larmer explore whiteness and amateriality. Wade Guyton and Trisha Donnelly do too little with tubular forms. Emphasizing pose, and lining the walls, the photographs of Ellie Semotan include studied portraits of artists and movie stars and a funky, irreverent striptease by the Austrian artist Elke Krystofek.

Less Severe

The next three shows evince a more overt determination to combine the twin of Conceptualism and materiality, with the tension building between painting and other mediums. With "Galerie Daniel Buchholz at Metro Pictures," Metro Pictures gives a well-known art gallery from Cologne, Germany, the run of its beautifully revised gallery. (It's amazing how adding one large doorway changes a space.) This dense, 30-artists, mostly European show ranges from paintings by Cheyney Thompson, Jutta Koether, Enrico Davidi and Silke Otschknapp to films by Mr. Thompson, Jack Goldstein and Florian Pamböck. In between lies a tremendous range of drawing, copying and appropriation by Lucy McKenzie, Tomma Abts, Mark Leckey, Wolfgang Tillmans and Henrik Olesen, among others. The subject: Metro's place in the history of early 80's appropriation art is reinforced, but indirectly.

"A Broken Arm" at 303 Gallery has been assembled by Mari Spirito, the gallery's director, using a title lifted from Duchamp, specifically his 1915 ready-made snow show-

el, "In Advance of a Broken Arm." With seven artists, the show pits painting against photography, flat against dimensional, found against made. Most works imply Duchampian degrees of disarray and chance, from Arnold Odermatt's documentary photographs of car accidents in the Swiss countryside to Gedi Sibony's mocking affirmations of formalism in twig, carpet and sheetrock. Katy Moran's deft, gestural paintings may do for abstraction what John Currin did for figurative: make it new and old at the same time. Djerfde Obolov's small, quirky paintings are sometimes worth a look. Works by Lutz Bacher, Hans-Peter Feldman and the under-appreciated Karen Kilimnik round out the bill.

Putting things back together again is central to "Dereconstruction" at Gladstone. This show's 19 artists have been assembled by Matthew Vilgis, director of the 100-year-old alternative space White Columns, who has been criticized for stepping out of the nonprofit sphere. But White Columns already participates in art fairs, and Mr. Vilgis's selections include only one Gladstone artist (Bruce Conner) and display his usual ecumenical mix of the self-taught, overlooked, hip and formerly hip.

The transformation of the everyday through process rules, whether in a Daliesque manipulated film by Takeshi Murata or the obsessively wrapped sculptures of the outsider Judith Scott. A dazzling 1978 sewn fabric painting by Lucas Samaras fills the usual Robert Smithson slot, finding common cause with Ms. Scott's sculptures and the knitted and knotted works of Alexandra Bircken, one of the show's emerging artists. The aggregate forms of A. R. Penck's sculp-



"Record" by Judith Scott, one of 19 artists in "Dereconstruction" at Gladstone Gallery.

Summer Exhibitions

Here are some of the current group shows featured at Chelsea galleries. Call for summer hours; most galleries are closed on Saturday.

- 'A BROKEN ARM' 303 Gallery, 323 West 23rd Street, (212) 255-1121, through Aug. 18.
- 'A FOUR-DIMENSIONAL BEING WRITES POETRY ON A FIELD WITH SCULPTURES' Matthew Marks, 321 West 23rd Street, (212) 243-6380, through Aug. 11.
- 'A RABBIT AS KING OF THE GHOSTS' Mitchell-Innes & Nash, 334 West 36th Street, (212) 747-7466, through Aug. 3.
- 'BETTER THAN SEX, BETTER THAN DISNEYLAND' Rannis Borquet, 532 West 24th Street, (212) 873-3421, through Aug. 16.
- 'BRIDE AND PURGE' Magan Projects, 317 10th Avenue, at 28th Street, (212) 244-2344, through Aug. 5.
- 'DERECONSTRUCTION' Gladstone, 115 West 24th Street, (212) 268-8300, through Aug. 15.
- 'DIAMONDS CUT DIAMONDS' Rare, 521 West 28th Street, (212) 260-1320, through tomorrow.
- 'FOUNTAINS' D'Amelio Terras, 325 West 22nd Street, (212) 352-9480, through Aug. 11.
- 'GALERIE DANIEL BUCHHOLZ AT METRO PICTURES' Metro Pictures, 519 West 24th Street, (212) 206-7109, through Sept. 16.
- 'GROUP SHOW' Cohan and Leslie, 138 10th Avenue, at 18th Street, (212) 208-8710, through Aug. 5.
- 'MATERIAL ABUSE' Carm Golden, 539 West 33rd Street, (212) 727-4004, through Aug. 4.
- 'MATERIALITY' at Kravets Webby, 521 West 21st Street, (212) 352-2258, through Aug. 25.
- 'MEN' at t-26, 537 West 23rd Street, (212) 643-1100, through Aug. 18.
- 'MEN AND MATERIALS' Jeff Bailey, 311 West 25th Street, (212) 889-8136, through Aug. 4.
- 'MONTEZUMA'S REVENGE' Nicole Klagenbrun, 528 West 36th Street, (212) 243-2325, through Aug. 18.
- 'PHOTOGRAPHY IS NOT AN ART' Alan Klotz, 511 West 25th Street, (212) 741-4794, through Aug. 18.
- 'POSE AND SCULPTURE' Casey Kaplan, 325 West 21st Street, (212) 640-7333, through Aug. 4.
- 'THE NEW LANDSCAPE, THE NEW STILL LIFE: SOUTHERN AND MODERN NEW ENGLAND & ROAD, 547 West 25th Street, (212) 243-7727, through Sept. 8.
- 'TWO FRIENDS AND SO ON' Andrew Kreps, 325 West 22nd Street, (212) 741-8800, through Aug. 12.
- 'WAR ON 45/ MY MIRRORS ARE PAINTED BLACK (FOR YOU)' Bortolami Dayan, 319 West 25th Street, (212) 727-2050, through Aug. 26.



T. Kelly Mason's installation "Rain, Rain, Rain/Up In Smoke and Down the Drain."

tures from 1972-73 presage those of Vincent Fecteau and B. Wurtz. The collages of John Stezaker and Linder Sterling resonate with the very different efforts of Eileen Quinan and Rita Ackermann, whose large tribute to the British performance artist Leigh Bowery is one of the best works of her career. In the wake of Gladstone's 2005 summer show, this exhibition feels almost like a purification rite.

"Fountains," the nine-artist show that inaugurates D'Amelio Terras's new quarters, is as good as, if less process-oriented than, the Gladstone show. It has been organized by Lucien Terras, one of the gallery's owners, on a summery theme. Jonah Freeman makes dystopic fountains, using soap suds, compound buckets and food coloring, while Sanford Biggers achieves a shimmering diaphanous beauty by merely videotaping the effects of a disco ball. Michael Vahrenwald evokes fountains of youth with a series of Minimalist photographs of therapeutic lamps (very Hiroshi Sugimoto).

The inimitable Carol Bove evokes a darker human energy with plenty of color in a Minimalist-Conceptual, box-text combination of books, objects and shelving; it proves that some things don't have to be glued down to be unified. Michael Phelan's tie-dyed mandala painting is a pictorial fountain. Noah Sheldon makes a sound fountain with two comically opposed chimneys, a broomstick and a tiny spiral ramp. Best of all is Daniel Lefcourt's positive-on-evoking "Optimism is a Force Multiplier," a mural-size photograph of carefully ordered objects and roots that suggests he may be collaborating with Mr. Freeman. Each item has been photographed separately in perfect one-point perspective, creating the strange impression of all things being equal.

Less and Less Severe

Artists can be counted on to provide the

last word. In "Men" at t-26, paintings of men by 10 women comment on the prevalence of the male gaze in art and of male artists in certain Chelsea summer group shows. Several confident realists carry the show, including Sylvia Sleigh, Karen Hoagland and Catherine Murphy, who offers a weirdly prosthetic rendering of her husband's nipple. Katherine Bernhardt paints a suave Neo-Expressionist dandy, while Clara Rojas ridicules the male need for combat in her buoyant faux-folk style. The strongest painting is by the show's organizer, Ellen Aillett: an anti-frontal, highly detailed masculine version of Courbet's "Origin of the World" that shows the model perched on a paint-splattered stool. For all its verisimilitude, Ms. Aillett's paint-handling gives the surface a life of its own.

In "Two Friends and So On" at Andrew Kreps, the artists Jonathan Horowitz and Rob Pruitt set in motion a curatorial round-robin selection process that reveals a network of style-based friendships. They chose Jennifer Bornstein, who chose Chivas Clem, who chose Meg Webber, and so on to a total of 30 artists. The show is a cheerful, illuminating mess partly because it is crowded, and less partly because tracing the selection process, and partly because it ignores current trends.

Moving from the realm of the Conceptual through abstract painting and sculpture and back, it circles in and out of fashion and in again. Most of the fun is to be had in the middle, where works by Joanne Greenbaum, John Newman and Colin Thomson are noteworthy. The whole thing is like a sandwich on thin slices of bread with a very rich filling. And it suggests that the narrow view — which is what fashion is — is often not fully satisfying. But the alignments and alliances traced here sum up art's latest version of the opposition of mind and matter. Each side has something the other lacks, and a third way, down the middle, is wide open.