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PAINTING SHOW

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'Painting Show' at Eastside Projects is the latest in a series of 'group productions' that use the mode of a medium to explore it from within. This is done not just from a theoretical perspective but with an active involvement in producing new display methods and through this, new work.

Three large walls denote the parameters of the show. The left hand side of the gallery is covered with an experiment in painted colour by Nicolas Party- a new work titled 'Decorative Pattern' comprising the same pattern - a sort of frazzle crisp shape- in a range of high saturation colours from the Montana Gold spray paint range. The whole of the conjoining back wall is given to a painting of quite a different tone: 'Untitled' by Tamuna Sirbiladze is a tight but expressive series of foresty strokes in a range of dark blues and greens. The right hand wall framing the space is a section of the Mobile Wall System from Vienna Secession designed by Adolf Krischanitz in 1986 and currently on loan to Eastside. This wall carries the largest section of Sophie von Hellermann's 'A Brief History of Civilisation', painted directly onto its surface, and is the starting point for the 'Mobile Wall System' (After Adolf Krischanitz) created and utilised by curators Gavin Wade and von Hellermann throughout the exhibition space that is formed between the three painted walls.

'Mobile Wall System' helps to break this large group show into segments. Each work can be seen in relation to its particular back-drop: either a section of the series 'A Brief History of Civilisation' or a sheet of hardboard, both of which are interrupted by lines of powder-coated aluminium colour that act as a code, helping the viewer to navigate this complicated space. Whilst they provide a much needed sense of continuity in this very varied show, you might imagine that Party, Sirbiladze and von Hellermann's works detract from or undermine the others, but they are incredibly sympathetic and the juxtapositions they offer throw some works into a very interesting light. The exciting thing about the Richard Woods work, for example, is not so much the piece in itself but the way that the fractured fragments of wood depicted are given a greater sense of shattering movement by Party's wall painting. There is a careful but instinctual placement of works across the show that results in moments like the dots in von Hellermann's painting seeming to seep into the Josh Smith work, and the yellow

of her tiger seeming to mirror the tone of the painterly interruptions in RH Quaytman's piece placed on top of it. The loose, almost Kirschner style of her series and its potentially tongue in cheek monumental title put the other paintings into an interesting dialogue with a broader history of painting.

The square and triangular grid system employed by Wade and von Hellermann creates flexible sight lines through sections of the show, allowing different groups to arrange themselves as you move around the space, so that works by Alexis Marguerite Teplin and Brendan Cass, with similar styles but contrasting palettes come into alignment and then shift out again. The potential flexibility of this system is highlighted by the presentation of one wall in two parts: 'Wall 4: 2 panels, split, short - blue, brown, yellow, silver'.

Two works break away from this scheme: John Russell and Fabienne Audéoud's ludicrously titled (too long to quote here), bendy, surreal, African style giraffe and DJ Simpson's crumpled silver, green and pink sheet of aluminium, 'Pink Front', both lean up against the only white wall. This creates some useful interplay between the show and the gradually building long-term works found throughout Eastside's space.

The title of this exhibition could denote a survey show but maybe 'Painting Show' avoids setting itself up for failure by presenting itself as such through its engagement with painting from within. Painting Show does, however, present a range of perspectives on contemporary painting by showing a selection of works that are important now. Many pieces take painting in an unstraightforward, challenging but celebratory way. Hayley Tompkins' 'Knife IV' is a kitchen knife with a flower motif on the handle covered in a thin layer of yellow, grey and orange gouache balanced on two small pins. Quaytman's contribution, 'Distracting Distance, Chapter 16 (Woman in the Sun Yellow Scuff)' is a silk-screened photograph in black and white of a woman interrupted by luminous painterly sections of yellow gesso. 'Comme ci, comme ça' by Rob Pruitt has a large, extruded 'smiley' emoticon drawn out in black flocking on an acrylic and enamel background, with the scribbly eyes and flat-line mouth so far apart that you almost forget what it symbolizes. Then there are the more sculptural engagements with painting: Rupert Norfolk's 'Blind II'; David Musgrave's 'Paper Golem no.5'; Ashley Bickerton's large plastic laminate on wood object resembling a games console encasing an acrylic and digital print image full of symbols and scrawls that straddles object and painting whilst dealing with the historical problem of the frame.

Most of the works presented are from 2011 but there are a few key works that could be seen as anchors, or references: 'S-Tar Child' (1999) by Simon Bill; Paul Thek's 'Untitled (ribbon)' (circa 1988) and George Condo's 'Monochromatic Portrait' (1996). As well as those names that you would expect to find in a show about painting (Condo, Imran Qureshi), artists not primarily associated with the medium can also be found: Laure Prouvost and William Pope. L amongst others. The contrast of established and emergent work, with the strong but sensitive background of the 'Mobile Wall System' and 'A Brief History of Civilisation' is what makes this show fresh. A key moment in 'Painting Show' is the inclusion of a painting by the infamous late footballer George Best, purportedly bought by someone at Eastside from a carer working with Best in rehab. Whilst this could be a tediously ironic in-joke, 'The Bear' does not appear to be out of place in a show that incorporates 'bad' painting by Paul Thek alongside the spotless works of Alessandro Raho. Whatever the reasoning, the decision to include Best's bear gives the whole show a sense of lightness and humour not always present in a show of this scale and ambition.