

Forethoughts and Hindsights
Undersights/Overminds

I recently saw in an exhibition, a monochrome Gerhard Richter painting hung just a few feet from an Ad Reinhardt Black painting. This to me became somewhat of an inspiring moment. There next to each other were two medium sized canvases both done in oil paint, both monochrome and nearly black. Yet clearly in one sense these paintings couldn't have been further from each other in their completely extreme and opposing approaches.

The Reinhardt, an example of how far a painting can go and remain so entirely without getting wrapped up with concepts or becoming a reductive "object" or merely an empiricism of materials. Entirely premised as a strict visual experience, this painting goes as far as a painting can go without becoming something else, no brush strokes, no mechanical paint, "no color," subjectless, etc., ~~the proverbial what you see is what you see.~~

The Richter, when looked at quickly, could perhaps have been painted by the same artist. Nearly black, a cold dark gray actually, and evenly textured as if painted by a method used in a Hotel lobby, it is clearly a painting, but it somehow doesn't expect being looked at. By the mechanical nature of the textures, the distancing effects of the stoic gray and indifferent luster this painting wishes to be regarded through its idea or perhaps better stated, its thoughts about questioning originality and existence, the premise of painting, and of artifice. Most artists are versed with his plural conceptual strategy, his work at several distinct "genres" of painting at once.

This painting is as far as one can reduce thinking and "idea" in a painting without loosing it to picture or to the primacy of seeing, an idea formed of thinking as far as it can go without getting upstaged, deduced to the extreme. The Reinhardt - just seeing, not a signification anywhere, not even an object.

There is in this encounter a dichotomy of extremes which have overlapped, and for me, formed an idea for an exhibit, an exhibit involving artists who well versed with the critical "positions" which artists consistently have imposed upon them - as I have just done - have formulated work which defrays critical attacks, it is art of generalization, and ambiguity by design, it inherently proceeds with the critical taxonomy taken into account. One of the common methods of this approach is a critical self-consciousness manifested by well engineered aping of the making of the art work or its

sink voluptuously into the peace of nomination." "Ultimately the obtuse meaning can be seen as an accent, the very form of an emergence, of a fold (even a crease) marking the heavy layer of information and signification. This self-conscious display of factual particulars - the un-apologetic look of a wig, pasty make up-in the film, the artifice of mechanical paint (in Richter) or the near-absence of artifice (in Reindhardt), and in like ways all the artists in this exhibit (the studio floor sweepings of Glen Seator) usurps standard analyses, meeting the viewer head on.

Deluge
fold

The work assembled here may also be reflected upon pure thinking because it is in thinking as it is in the art of this exhibit that meanings and ideas become synonymous and of the same part as what is sensed, perceived, or, felt. When one thinks, one is riding in a grammar which in turn makes use of other grammars, syntax, generalization, pointed focus. We are experiencing in time, sensation, and symbol. We never question that these seemingly opposed methods as assumptions co-exist simultaneously and for good reason. Thinking cohabitates with perception, while thought speculates, it assesses, taking stock of the experience.

On close inspection each artist here has devised an individual and singular grammar which like the process of thinking collapses or ceases to be intelligible at the precise moment that either the concept aspect of the work or the sensory aspect of the work is removed or neglected by interpretation. The net effect of this is a singularity to the work which insists to persist by rebuffing one sided critical analysis. This singularity is effective precisely because of its inherent ambivalence and this ambivalence is the result of the generalized structure of the work, in meaning and in form.

This is not to suggest that these artists must be pre-occupied with these ideas, but rather to assemble a group of artists to demonstrate the various ways artists are manifesting these methods to proceed with the opening the mind of the art and the viewer.

Paul Dickerson June/2/93