



this is tomorrow

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Condo, Gonzalez-Torres, Kelley, Prince, Salle, Sherman, Trockel, Wool

Skarstedt, New York, January - February 2016

Review by Phoebe V. Bradford



Courtesy the artists and Skarstedt

Skarstedt is known for presenting wide-ranging exhibitions that often develop discussion between different generations of prominent American artists, and the distinctly rich display of late Twentieth-Century works recently shown at their Upper East Side space was no exception. Their winter group exhibition saw a concise arrangement of work by George Condo, Mike Kelley, Richard Prince, David Salle, Cindy Sherman, Rosemarie Trockel and Christopher Wool. Though minimal and lacking a coinciding curatorial text, themes of representation and authorship could be unpacked through each artist's individual work.

The ground floor gallery accommodated the work of Wool, Condo and Trockel, each of which furnished the white walled space with earthy muted tones. Wool's painting 'East Broadway Run Down' was placed opposite Trockel's knitted wall work 'Who Will Be In In 1999?'. Both these works framed Condo's figurative bronze sculpture 'Reclining Figures' in the centre of the room. The juxtaposition of these three pieces set up a narrative that focused on the importance of process and the way in which it can break age-old traditions of painting. Each artist takes traditional subjects and methods and transforms them into their own contemporary oeuvres. For instance, Wool uses stencils and spray paint to create his enamel abstract wall work; Condo mutates bronze away from tradition by choosing



untraditional subject matter, while Trockel forms knitted-paintings containing cultural symbols and contemporary text.

Upstairs this nouveau nostalgic theme was revisited. In a slightly less subdued colour palette, the works of Sherman, Kelley and Prince mirrored the composition of display of Skarstedt's lower gallery. In Sherman's 'Untitled #203' portrait the artist adopts an ancestral visage, playfully hijacking the traditional through contemporary reversal of gender roles. The eerie nature of Sherman's photograph paired well with Kelley's uncanny teddy-bear portraits, 'Ahh... Youth'. Kelley's set of eight prints deliver an imitation of representation through the non-art objects of found stuffed animals. Amongst the kitsch toy mug shots is Kelley's own worn down face, subtly suggesting the artist's own taxing stages of adolescence. Alongside Prince's appropriated newspaper cartoon – another intervention of the traditional in contemporary culture – Kelley and Sherman's works press upon the reminiscent and the necessity of nostalgia in art today.

Finally, the last of the three rooms of Skarstedt observed a deeper spectrum of chromatic works. We could again view Kelley's work in the form of a floor-based installation, a powerful display of clinquant knitted shawls circularly spreading out from octopus and teddy bear heads. 'Untitled' married well with Salle's flamboyant abstract painting 'Flying, Growing', which explores a manifold of cultural references through text and graffiti-esque illustrations. This staged artifice, which certainly edges on the twee, calls on multiple ways of looking at originality through redefinition in the post-modern. Gonzalez-Torres' quiet work 'Untitled (21 Days of Bloodwork – Steady Decline)' provided an interesting pause alongside the other more aesthetically demanding works. His minimal grid drawings are preoccupied with notions of authorship in the Twenty First Century and offered a calm presence in conjunction with the louder works of Salle and Kelley.

Skarstedt's winter group show exemplified the gallery's dexterous curatorial ability, astutely bringing together works made during the period of the late 1980s and early 1990s, offering a sense of nostalgia for an epoch of great, taboo breaking art, of pre-recession and ostensibly brighter looking times.