
Philipp von Rosen Galerie

Elan Greenwald

A Matter of Appearance

Exhibition from April 17, through June 13, 2015

Opening April 16, 2015 at 7.00 pm; the artist will be present

We are pleased to inaugurate on April 16, 2015 at 7 pm with *A Matter of Appearance* our first solo exhibition of Los Angeles artist Elan Greenwald. Greenwald was a Fellow at Cologne's Kunsthochschule für Medien for the last six months. He worked on a project about the colossal Nazi beach resort Prora that will be shown at Agency in Los Angeles this May. In Cologne we will show Greenwald's first single exhibition. Here he will exhibit two groups of works:

The first, *A Matter of Appearance*, the work that gives the exhibition its title, consists of three categories of objects: seven watercolor "portraits" of Greenwald's "favorite" artists; Michael Asher, Daniel Buren, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Dan Graham, Mike Kelley, Mathias Poledna, and Stephen Prina. A group of scanned and perfectly digitally manipulated boarding passes that bear these artists' names and – through an intricate system of signs – their exhibition history and age. And, finally, a video showing the artist himself, clad in white coveralls covered in real-world logos using his first name.

Over centuries, watercolor has earned a reputation as a dilettante's medium, used by those with "time to waste". While Greenwald does not have time to waste, these paintings, his first works in watercolor, draw on that impression. Also: By describing the watercolors as "portraits" one could be misled to think that they really show the artists while they are flying from one place to another. However, Greenwald rather pictures (with his brush) these artists as airplane passengers or, said in a more abstract way, as vacant representations of artists that have a certain importance: artists that have reached a certain notoriety in the art world as teaching or exhibiting artists, successful artists on the move by air within an international network. By not representing the artists, by withholding from his pictures personal features that would otherwise identify the sitter as a specific person, Greenwald depicts the representation of persons in general. The relation between "sitter" and "work" is interchangeable.

All seven artists had been indicated *to* him as potentially interesting *for* him by his teachers while he was still a student. The "portraits" thus can be taken as souvenirs of identification and idealization. In addition to that, the seven artists have a more or less conceptual, sometimes site specific, some times critical and even political praxis in common. "Institutional critique" is the common denominator. As a degree-carrying Master of Fine Arts, having graduated under the spell of these artists, Greenwald throws his name among those of his favorites.

Philipp von Rosen Galerie

In addition to "identifying" the individual artists, the "boarding passes" give us a plausible flight path for each of the artists based on their solo exhibition history around the date they had been identified to Greenwald. Plus: the departure gate number represents the age of the artists at the time they had been identified (thus telling us also indirectly when Greenwald had learned about them). And the flight numbers on the boarding passes indicate the number of solo exhibitions the artists had had at the moment of identification. Finally, the boarding passes allow us to identify the artists' countries of origin. They fly on either the flag carrier of their home country or one of the three major US-based airlines whose corporate branding relies on symbols of nationalism.

The video, the third part of *A Matter of Appearance*, shows the artist painting while clad in white coveralls covered in logos that recall his first name, a name that belongs both to Greenwald and to a variety of commercial products and corporations. The video consists mainly of shots of these logos in near-isolation which faithfully reproduce these graphic design motifs' immaterial qualities as signs. Through a methodical cycle of shots that both show and withhold from view, the video takes the form of a fetish video.

The second group of works consists of seven – and there are more to come, because, as mentioned, the artist has no time to waste – photographs that show watercolors of anonymous airplane passengers painted in the *plein air* of airplane cabins, the folding table in front of the artist sitting in a plane (and thus: the easel in this very situation), the paint box, the brushes, and other incidental elements placed on the table. The watercolors' inherent immediacy is broken by the photograph of the whole context, and sometimes even parts of the artist himself. Between the viewer and the watercolor lies the mediated sterile surface of the photograph.

For further information or images please contact the gallery.