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OYVIND FAHLSTROM

ALIGHIERO BOETTI

EDOUARD VUILLARD

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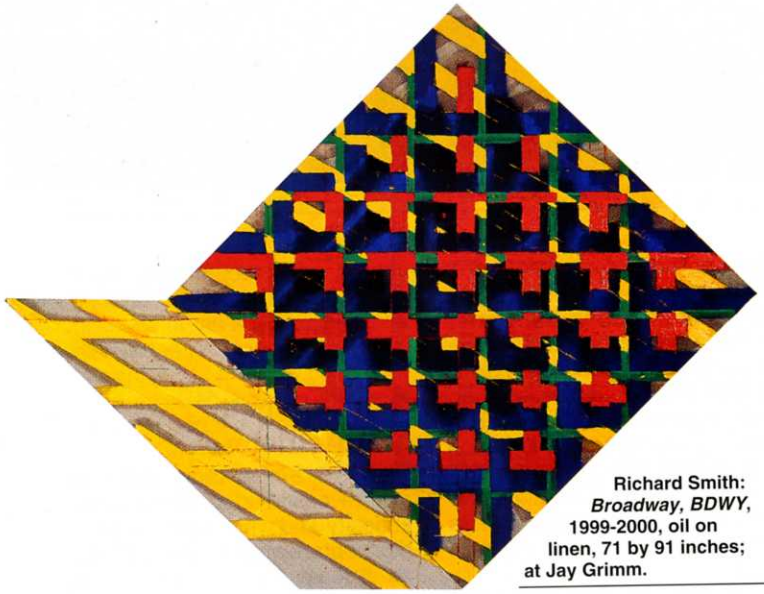


Richard Smith: *Broadway, BDWY*, 1999-2000, oil on linen, 71 by 91 inches; at Jay Grimm.

coming away impressed with the idea that art could be so playfully light and so reasonable.

In this show of work from 1999 to 2000, Smith utilizes linen gessoed on the reverse side and stretched on square supports that he tilts into diamond shapes. From the bare bones of a penciled grid, he begins an additive painting program that plays improvisationally off the drafted structure. Deeply saturated, brusquely painted color jazzily crisscrosses the surface, intercut with a kind of breathing space where Smith leaves the raw linen exposed. In three of the four large paintings that made up the exhibition, long rectangles are attached to the sides of the central diamond shape in order to relieve some of the density that occurred from building up a weave of athletically painted diagonal and perpendicular color bands.

A trapezoidal rectangle is mounted on the lower left of one diamond-shaped canvas, *Broadway, BDWY*. Its perspectivally skewed cadmium yellow latticework provides an underlying structure for the straight-up-and-down bright red and cobalt blue stripes that zip across the diamond shape. There are also residual notes of viridian underpainting and thin trails of linear color, the remainders of painting decisions that ultimately were not executed but add to the map of the surface.

The hints of the pastoral that were in some of Smith's previous work are gone now, replaced by abstracted references to crosswalks and building facades. These new paintings counterpoint their structure and rich color with an urban grittiness, like an elegant woman in evening wear stepping out onto the macadam of a New York street.

—Joe Fyfe

Phil Sims at Stark

Phil Sims's work has changed, although for those whose eyes glaze over at the sight of monochrome paintings, the difference won't register. While Sims often creates on a monumental scale for museum installations or for collections like Count Giuseppe Panza's, his new work presents a less public presence. The format is large enough so that the color has authority, yet small enough so that authority is not dissipated. Of course color can be made to successfully span large fields, but by scaling down somewhat, Sims allows different sensations to emerge, a greater intimacy, a more private response.

These paintings, all vertical and dated 2000, come in a broader array of colors than Sims usually exhibits together, perhaps a formalist's nod to diversity. In the rear gallery were a red, a blue and a yellow painting, but the red is almost blue, the blue-red almost purple, and the intense, volatile yellow dims and brightens as you gaze at it (Sims calls them *Untitled Red*, *Untitled Dark Violet*, *Untitled Yellow*). Each verges on another tonality, another character, another kind of balance between stroke, color and light, which makes these surfaces complex, unstable and consequently intriguing; if you looked hard enough, you might resolve the ambiguities, but most likely not, since they are built in.

Shown in the main gallery were *Untitled Orange*, warm with a cool sheen; *Untitled Lavender*, cool with a warm sheen; and *Green Portrait #10*, which is more of a teal, a green that teeters toward blue, teasing the eye. *Untitled White* is actually green, but just barely, more like the thought of green, while *Untitled Umber* is a deep, luscious, chocolate brown.

Construction loosened, process revealed, these oil paintings move between surface and depth and are breachable. You can see into them. The strokes play across plush, velvety surfaces—art for the fingertips, but don't touch—as markings of a free-floating plus-and-minus system that advances and recedes. Sims is reveling in a beauty that is more in the foreground than before. His work is retinal art of a high order and a reminder that however compelling Duchamp's point of view, it is not the only one.

—Lilly Wei

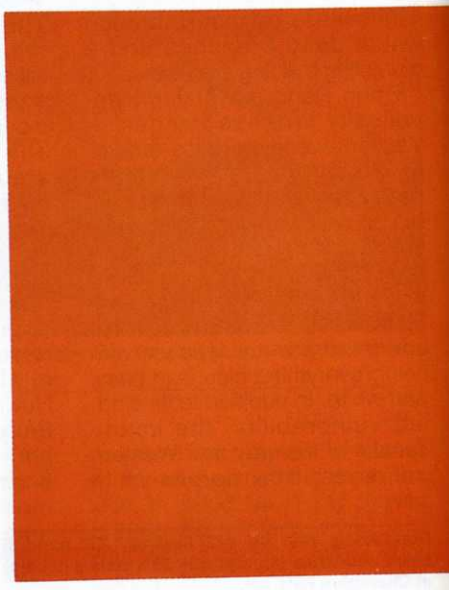
Doug Ohlson at Andre Zarre

For some time, Doug Ohlson has been framing his take on the figure-and-ground problem in terms of geometry versus expressionism. In the paintings in this recent exhibition (all acrylic on canvas), he creates the illusion that hard-edged rectangles float in front of grounds that are freely brushed or stained, creating an intriguing tension, almost as if the organic had generated the ideal. While on the structural level these paintings resemble each other, the performance of each is specific and unique.

The basic unit, often repeated several times within a single horizontal canvas, is a narrow, vertical, painterly field with a vertical rectangle painted on it. Ohlson also applies long, thin bands of color, sometimes over the long sides of the larger rectangles, sometimes over the backgrounds, forcing the freely brushed ground into a rectilinear conduit. Subtly subverting expectations, he may border the rectangle on both sides, on one side or not at all. Elsewhere, he dispenses with the large rectangle altogether, leaving only the borders. This has the effect of intimating a rectangular space within the two parallel strips.

Ghost Light (2000) is one of the most successful pieces. Ohlson varies his regular structure by making two rectangles within each of four vertical quadrants. In three cases, the inner verticals are each bordered on their outer edges by painted strips of obviously different hue from both the background and the foreground shapes. In one case, the color used to edge the rectangles is so close to the background hue that it all but disappears, leaving the two rectangles freely afloat in that quadrant.

The paintings reveal playful but not capricious color choices within their formal frameworks. The colors are often high-key but eschew quick optical effects for slower vibrant resonances. The viewer was gratified by long observation of these pieces, as loosely painted edges began to pulsate in relation to the straight



Phil Sims: *Untitled Orange*, 2000, oil on linen, 60 by 50 inches; at Stark.

ones nearby. Some paintings read as portals, others as impenetrable decorative panels. As he has for many years, Ohlson in this exhibition demonstrated the resiliency of his version of modernist abstract painting. —*Vincent Katz*

Eduardo Costa at Cecilia de Torres

Eduardo Costa makes volumetric paintings—solid, geometric forms that consist entirely of acrylic paint, with no real chassis other than their own material substance. Neither carved nor molded, his new works, all dated 2000, proceed from a wad of paint or layers of acrylic subjected to a process of accretion until they reach their intended form and dimensions. Like Costa's previous volumetric paintings, dating as early as 1994—a representation in acrylic paint of a lemon on a saucer, a blue hammer, a bowl with fruit—these geometric monochromes are radical paintings uncompromised by the discreet apparatus necessary to attach them to a wall.

The essentially performed nature of their making is foreshadowed by Costa's activities as an early Conceptual artist involved with mass media in his native Argentina. Beginning in 1966, Costa divided his time between Buenos Aires and New York, where he became closely associated with the manifestations of such artists and poets as Vito Acconci, Scott Burton, John Perreault and Anne Waldman. He linked couture and culture with the publication of *Fashion Fictions*, his celebrated series of wearable gold sculptures. Costa decamped for Rio de Janeiro in 1978, where he became involved with the interactive experiments of Hélio Oiticica, Lygia Pape and Lygia Clark.

While his recent geometric paintings allude to the shaped abstractions of the neo-Concrete and recall the Latin American break from European modernist traditions, they possess an internal, physical logic of their own. Dramatically lighted and inescapably installed at the viewer's eye level, each painting reveals some of the activity of its making. The businesslike yet painterly strokes of brush and knife that frost the surface of *White Rectangle Painting*, pleasingly proportioned at 60 by 39 by 4 inches, run parallel to its edges in an economy of movement, while the concentric strokes of *White Sphere with Black Invisible Core* suggest the winding of a ball of yarn, only its title revealing the core of black paint that resides at its center.

Emphasizing their condition as paintings, Costa crafted three volumetric rectangles at the standard 30 by 24 inches of a painting, but object-deep at 4 inches. In violation of the viewer's space, two were installed at extreme angles to the wall, while across the way three triangular paintings sharing equal dimensions jutted out like wedges, as though suspended in motion, each one attached to the wall along a different, narrow side. Witty and decorous by the nature of Costa's practice, these rigorously rectangular, triangular and spherical paintings moved in orderly fashion from their essence to their substance, from what a painting is understood to be to what a painting might wish to be. —*Edward Leffingwell*

Marjetica Potrč at the Guggenheim Museum

There was something both appropriate and slightly ironic about the selection of Slovenian artist Marjetica Potrč as the winner of the 2000 Hugo Boss Prize. Her work, *Kagiso: Skeleton House*, pays homage to the shantytowns and favelas that sprout up unbidden on the outskirts of the world's major cities. Itself the victim of shifting priorities, the prize and its proceedings seemed shunted out of the limelight—sidelined, even marginalized—as the museum continues with its ambitious global expansion program.

The previous two Hugo Boss Prizes were trumpeted with exhibitions of all the finalists' work at the Guggenheim SoHo, followed by an awards ceremony at the museum. This year, which marks the end of the Guggenheim's arrangement with Hugo Boss, there was no finalist exhibition (the short list included Vito Acconci, Maurizio Cattelan, Michael Elmgreen and Ingar Dragset, Tom Friedman, Barry Le Va and Tunga) or public awards ceremony. Instead, the ceremony was held in the Hugo Boss offices, and a small exhibition of the winner's work was mounted in a gallery off the ramp of the museum's uptown location.

Potrč's work is all about marginalization. A trained architect, she documents and re-creates the unauthorized structures that the urban poor have cobbled together using the castoffs of their wealthier countrymen. For her prize show, she installed a pair of structures in the gallery. One was a South African skeleton house consisting of a concrete floor, a corrugated plastic roof and a single toilet. Such houses are provided by the government to the poor, who are then expected to add walls and other fixtures required to make them functional.

The other structure was a small shack made of discarded building materials, which, she noted, served as the precursor and inspiration for the skeleton house. The walls of this second dwelling were a patchwork of concrete blocks, aluminum sheets and recycled wood, suggesting an ingenuity born of desperation. Pointedly, a satellite dish atop the roof served as a reminder that television is the purveyor of global commercial culture and the desires it inculcates.

The walls of the gallery were covered with text-laden photographic collages documenting housing problems worldwide and the unofficial solutions individuals have developed to solve them. Ranging from illegal shop facades in Hong Kong, to squatters in the center of São Paulo, to the houses built within 24 hours permitted by the Turkish government, these images accompanied by commentaries underscored Potrč's affinity for the unexpected beauty of such jerry-built arrangements.

Potrč's entire presentation provided a critique of the inequitable distribution of the world's wealth and resources. Her approach recalls that of Krzysztof Wodiczko, whose homeless vehicles were designed to serve the needs of those living on the streets of New York. Both artists are interested in legitimizing the means employed by people left out of the larger economy to create viable living spaces. Potrč flirts with the danger, as does Wodiczko, of romanticizing the poverty that forces the destitute to erect these tempo-

Eduardo Costa: Installation view of exhibition, 2001; at Cecilia de Torres.

Doug Ohlson: *Ghost Light*, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 67 by 134 inches; at Andre Zarre.