

GALERIE MARIA BERNHEIM

Mitchell Anderson

Flower Paintings

October 12 - November 23, 2021

Galerie Maria Bernheim London is delighted to present a new solo show by Swiss-based American artist Mitchell Anderson. This will be his first exhibition in the UK. Drawing upon his series of red encaustic paintings, Anderson brings a new set of references, whilst retaining the conceptual questioning surrounding the idea of the monochrome.

Through the title of the show, "*Flower Paintings*", the artist directly references Andy Warhol's famous series, first exhibited in 1964 at Leo Castelli's gallery, instantly imposing not only an art historical filter on the works, but one of appropriation. Yet upon entering the gallery, the viewer will not find reproductions of the famous hibiscus by the Pop artist, but other monochromatic representations of flowers.

Direct references are made to Christopher Wool, Michel Majerus and the ancestral tradition of still life painting with its embedded readings of sex and death. By employing imagery appropriated from what we have come to accept as mass culture, Anderson opens up the Pandora box of our imaginary museum as well as engages with our critical judgement, forcing us to reconsider a traditional vision of art history.

All of these images are known to the eye, yet it is their association that transcends their meaning as well as their new context. Anderson forensically isolates the cartoonish flowers of Wool to create a new composition in the form of an unseen original, in an act of reappropriating and resexualizing. Elsewhere, he associates them with a "blank" canvas to recall Warhol's Disaster series, in a painting where the eye naturally fills in the gap.

The glossy and shiny surfaces of the works immediately attract and capture the viewer, and it is only after careful consideration that the technique of the work reveals itself. The monochrome paintings are realized in encaustic, an ancient technique used since the Ancient Egyptians that has taken a particularly American connotation in the 20th Century through its use by artists such as Jasper Johns, Brice Marden and Lynda Benglis. The technique requires an intense physical labour to heat resin and beeswax with natural pigments, his choice of working monochromatically brings attention to the feeling of brushstrokes and bodies, but also to the ambivalent connotations of the colour red; love, hate, revolution luck...

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Just like Warhol, Anderson's vision of popular culture is harsh and violent, using the apparently innocent motif of the flower, he explores how we have come to personify and impose meaning on objects, creating a fabricated version of the world.

Mitchell Anderson (b. 1985 Chicago, USA) currently lives and works in Switzerland.

Recent institutional exhibitions include Fondazione Converso, Milan (2019) and Fri-Art Kunsthalle Fribourg (2017). Recent institutional group exhibitions include Kunsthalle Bern (2021), Kunsthalle Zürich (2020), Kunsthalle Basel (2020) and MAMCO, Geneva (2019). He is a frequent contributor of criticism to a variety of international arts publications and has operated the project space Plymouth Rock, in Zürich, since 2014.

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