

76 GRAND STREET NEW YORK NY 10013



CONSTRUCTION

**TAUBA AUERBACH
JOE BRADLEY
PETER COFFIN**

**XYLOR JANE
MITZI PEDERSON
ARA PETERSON**

**CURATED BY KATHY GRAYSON
JUNE 28 – AUGUST 9, 2008
76 GRAND STREET**

CONSTRUCTION, an exhibition of conceptual abstraction curated by Kathy Grayson, opens at Deitch Projects on June 29, 2008. While our Spring 2008 exhibition SUBSTRACTION, curated by Nicola Vassell, explored street-inspired action painter abstraction, this sister exhibition complements our survey of new trends in abstraction by comprising the best of conceptual painting and sculpture.

Many young artists today are reviving strategies in abstraction that have fallen into disuse and reinvigorating them with contemporary concerns. Reshuffling the deck of conceptualism and minimalism, they use new technology and fresh sensibilities to further the projects of the last century's best abstract artists.

Tauba Auerbach pushes conceptual text work and word play past its logical conclusion into the absurd. With a strong dose of pattern and design, she makes linguistic tricks and visual puns vital again through her background in sign painting and her handmade aesthetic. In this exhibition she includes paintings of seemingly uniform op-art ink dot fields that at a distance resolve into images of crumpled paper, and a 50/50 graphic black and white tiled floor whose vigorous pattern seems to deny the fact that it is exactly half black and half white. Such deceptive versions of this 50/50 idea will be explored in her forthcoming book 50/50, available this fall through D.A.P.

Joe Bradley is a minimal man to the extent that he is interested in the least amount of action or work required to turn his materials into "artwork." He explores how pared-down he can make an arrangement of colored rectangles and still have it read as a figure, or how slightly changing the shape of one square can make a standing man "run." His non-figurative work is full of dead-pan punning: a clump of tall light brown rectangles is called "Bread", a large blue rectangle on the floor is called "mirror." In this exhibition he has composed new vinyl wall works that are more than paintings but less than objects.

Peter Coffin is a versatile conceptual sculptor who occasionally puts whimsy into the traditionally serious genre of modernist sculpture. He often works with conventional ideas that are rendered absurd by one further rotation of thought. Various projects have included weaving iconic works of modernist sculpture into a fairytale (think Brancusi's Infinite Column meets Jack and the Beanstalk), an Allan McCollum-esque

repetitive array—of plant life, and most recently a video wall not unlike those Nam June Paik made popular in the pre-digital information age, but instead runs footage of animals at play. In the same exhibition was a minimal looking kinetic sculpture designed for daily balloon releases. In this exhibition Coffin has installed a rotating disk of translucent colors reminiscent of a 'party disc' that will spin slowly just under the gallery skylight; a sort of cheap natural light display that will continually alter the feel of the exhibition.

Xylor Jane makes intense and repetitive op art paintings based not on Sol LeWitt-ish geometry or logic, but instead on her crazy calendars, journals, and personal prime number systems. Instead of sober repetition of discrete visual order, Xylor uses her obsessive personal observations and usually fairly simple algorithms to make very exuberant and sometimes inadvertently psychedelic handmade paintings. In one piece she makes black and phosphorescent marks that change in orientation and phosphorescence with the calendar over 11.22 years, where “art career” events and “failure misery and demise” each affect the coding of the months. In the new series created for this exhibition, she charts her near-death experiences.

Mitzi Pederson puts elegance and tension into minimal materials not known for their grace: cinderblock, wood, and plastic. Instead of a Richard Serra prop piece we have two curved and beglittered pieces of wood held in perfect counterpoise by simple string or cellophane. A cinderblock pile is treated to the sweet and subtle detailing of a haute couture gown by precision glittering every broken edge. Mitzi rarely treats the front of objects, but never forgets to treat the sides or back. Her site-specific sculptures take frumpy materials and boring architecture and harmonize them into lyrical seemingly lightweight concoctions that rethink the minimal object.

Ara Peterson comes out of an efflorescence of very maximal and very figurative art in Providence Rhode Island. At the center of this activity, Ara has nonetheless always had his focus in experimental video with a minimal aesthetic. His videos often couple simple concepts with repetitive and expanding abstract imagery. A series of exploding and interweaving diamond forms builds to a multiply transparent thicket of bursting energy and noise. A small triangle of abstract video gets reflected into a giant glowing geodesic sphere of pulsating video in a recent collaboration with Jim Drain. His sculptures and wall works are laser-cut painted wood slats whose choppy undulations come from patterns generated by his experiments in video. In these, the video data meets the motions of the videos meets the sound waves of the videos all made 3D and painted bright pop colors.

In sync with the playfulness of these artists with respect to their art historical precedents, *Contraction* as a title is meant to suggest not only to conceptual abstraction but also both Russian Constructivism and the idea of the “contraption.” These new strategies of conceptual abstraction exhibited are all tied to concrete social phenomena, often using the latest technology and in that sense, owe something to Constructivism. It is fun and enlightening to see, say, Joe Bradley’s vinyl parallelograms in the context of Kasimir Malevich. But as was the case with many Russian Constructivist sculptures, many of the works in the exhibition owe something to the awkward, wonky-ness of a “contraption” as well. This humbling persistence of handmade-ness is one of the signature elements of these young artists, who don’t take themselves, or their materials, too seriously.

Both CONSTRUCTION and SUBTRACTION will be documented in a box set put out by Charta Books Spring 2009.

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