

GALERIE GISELA CAPITAIN

STEPHEN PRINA

¡Hola! ¿Qué tal?

November 13 - December 23, 2014

Galerie Gisela Capitain is pleased to announce its seventh solo exhibition with Stephen Prina.

Stephen Prina is known for his complexly constructed oeuvre, within which he operates on several different referential levels. He appropriates and recites existing artworks, music, and literature, as well as the authors thereof in his titles and references to time and place. Many of Prina's work groups are conceived as temporally open ended and may also be transformed by him at any time in order to adapt them to individual exhibition spaces.

In this way the paintings, sculptures, drawings, and installations presented in the exhibition also refer to groups of ideas that Prina has already been dealing with for several years. The so called "blind paintings", in which Prina's idea of painting manifests itself in space, were first shown at Galerie Gisela Capitain in 2007. The systematic structure of this work group is determined by the color system of the paint manufacturer; wherein Prina follows the order of their color charts in his application of paint. This reference system is reflected in the titles of the works. Another personal point of reference is the height of the artist himself, which dictates the height of the painterly and gesturally applied colors. Overriding all of this is the adaptive installation of these paintings in the context of an individual space.

The blind paintings on display in the gallery were originally made for Prina's large solo exhibition at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2013, some of which were presented in the museum's Japanese Pavilion. Built by American architect Bruce Goff, the pavilion houses the museum's Asian collection. The gold, copper, and bronze tones that Prina chose for these particular paintings harmonize with the colors inside the pavilion, with the art as well as the building. The motif that Prina selected for his Cologne invitation card is a clear reference to this original context.

With these, three new sculptures were also exhibited in Los Angeles, producing a further connection to the architect and the exhibition space. The charcoal, and azure blue slag glass used to make the sculptures resemble the building materials that Goff used in both the Japanese Pavilion and the Ford House in Aurora, Illinois, the site of Prina's last film. *THE WAY HE ALWAYS WANTED IT* is the title of the 35 mm film from 2008, as well as the sculptures. This strongly self-referential title first appeared in 1979 attached to a never realized sound installation, and should be taken literally, referring to art works that Prina had 'always' wanted to make.

The point of departure for the complex system of references in the series *Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet*, is the painting oeuvre of Édouard Manet. Stephen Prina has been making drawings of Manet's 556 paintings since 1988, the size, chronological order, and titles of which are the same as the originals. Prina takes his information on title, year, and provenance from the catalog *The Complete Paintings of Manet*, by Harry N. Abrams, Inc. (New York, 1967). With this, Prina also offers an overview of the distribution of Manet's works at the time of the catalog's publishing. Prina doesn't reproduce figurative content in *Exquisite Corpse* though, rather, he changes medium and produces monochrome paper works in the same size as the originals, mounted in black wooden frames. This form of reconstruction is accompanied by a serigraph which shows systematically scaled down reproductions of the complete works of Manet. The serigraph functions as an index, within which each individual work can be located. To be seen in the current exhibition is work 244 which is derived from the painting *Portrait d'Alice Lecouvé dans un Fauteuil* (1875?).

The cord installations that are also being exhibited are the product of the *Exquisite Corpse* described above, and Prina's reaction to the spatial constraints of a given room. In 2008, the largest of the *Exquisite Corpse* images selected for Prina's major solo exhibition at the Staatlichen Kunsthalle Baden-Baden could not be hung on the wall reserved for it because it did not fit through the door leading into the exhibition space. So Prina conceived a new work, one simultaneously representing a reference to the conceptual artist Fred Sandbeck. Instead of the picture from the Manet series and the serigraph, he installed two, black cord rectangles with the same dimensions as the works that were originally supposed to hang on the wall. As a result of this site specific improvisation a second long term work began, one which refers to Manet's oeuvre, and clearly displays the process that characterizes Prina's work: the series

G A L E R I E G I S E L A C A P I T A I N

Untitled. Exquisite Corpse: The Complete Paintings of Manet. The cord works that Prina has selected for this exhibition refer to paintings by Manet that have references to Japanese themes themselves, thus Prina refers back to the Japanese Pavilion in Los Angeles, to Bruce Goff, and to the works which were made in that context.

All of the works shown in Cologne thematize the context of the origin of art, and represent a special connection between former and current exhibition spaces. With his work, Prina succeeds in broadening our view of art history while at the same time writing himself into it. Thus the ongoing series *Exquisite Corpse*, and the sculptures *THE WAY HE ALWAYS WANTED IT VIII-X* can be understood as homages to Édouard Manet and Bruce Goff, but they are also part of Prina's investigation of American cultural and intellectual history, as well as a reflection on his own artistic history.

"In the way the works gesture beyond themselves and, at the same time, interact with each other, a positively curatorial approach of the artist to his materials can be seen. This leads to a change of parameters; our attention is re-directed from the individual works to the relationships between them, a temporary situation achieved using the materials from thirty years of work development."

(Hans-Jürgen Hafner, 2008)