

Friedemann Heckel - LET EM TEL
10 April - 30 May 2015

Friedemann Heckel's work questions the relationship between the semiotic, visual, and haptic qualities of images and goods, and the political economy through which they circulate; and which is, in his works, quite literally inscribed on its surfaces. It accomplishes this via objects comprised of layered palimpsests of signs - material, imagistic, and discursive - which spring from, and are inspired by, the urban environment. These objects further engage the viewer on a phenomenological and perceptual level, establishing different experiences at different distances, in the process initiating varying degrees of intimacy and estrangement with and from the work before us, and the space it's in.

Looking around the gallery, one of the first things we notice is the diversity of glass panels and objects. From afar we are impressed by the interpenetration of reflections, as the various glass surfaces capture and refract fragmented views of the other works in the show, and of the 19th century rooms in which they are installed.

The other thing commanding our attention is a gestural drawing, executed in acrylic resin dispersion, which takes over the 'space's ultimate envelope': its walls. At first this may seem like the separate product of a distinct formal language, its maze of linear marks characterized by their intimation of meaning in flux, the referent just about to crystalize. While the glass panels impress themselves upon us as casings and surfaces detached from functional purposes in the urban landscape, where we imagine they might appear as screens or windows, say. But then we realize that the more expressive quality of the wall drawing is not actually a formal antithesis to the austerity of the monotone glass surfaces. Closer inspection, perhaps prompted by our desire to examine the curious luminous and liquid materiality of the acrylic resin, reveals that these inscriptions in fact recur throughout the show, since Heckel has etched them into the glass surfaces as well. The objects, surfaces, marks, and images that populate the gallery can thus be seen as linked together by Heckel's inscription of disjointed characters and signs, an intuitive practice mixing drawing and writing, and suggestive, in a general and abstract way, of urban forms like graffiti.

Heckel breaks down written language into fragmented gestures and reduces it to a series of signs trapped midway in the process of signifying. In this state, Heckel finds language to be as if momentarily freed from the functional ends to which it is often motivated in capitalist society and urban contexts in particular.

Once we have experienced the totality of the system of materials, marks, and techniques of display that Heckel has presented us with, we recognize a shared set of references to the built environment - from its signage, to its packaging, to its domestic décor. This we find both in the more aleatory, intuitive inscriptions on walls and glass, and in the snippets of the city that creep in through fragments of signage, especially the twin sculptural works, TEL and LET, that occupy the center of the second room.

From his meticulously-rendered 'copy', LET, of a found object, TEL, to the pigment he rubs into paper by hand to craft backdrops for the etched panes of glass, to the aluminum frames he builds for them, to the directness and immediacy of the etched and painted marks themselves, Heckel's work derives from his avowed asceticism with which he treats the materials and methodologies of his choice. In the process Heckel potentially opens up alternate ways of experiencing them, against the grain as it were.

Alex Bacon, Berlin/New York, 2015

Friedemann Heckel (born in 1986) lives in Berlin.

He studied at Universität der Künste in Berlin with Lothar Baumgarten and Michaela Meise.

Heckel's work has been included in exhibitions at Lehbruck-Museum, Duisburg, 2012;

Drawing Room, London, 2013; The Monte Carlo, Miami, 2014; Los Angeles-based Gallery Smart Objects, 2015; besides others.

His curatorial work includes projects like Post-Studio Tales, Berlin, 2012, and exhibitions at Berlin-based project space Note On, 2012, and Klingental in Basel, 2014. He has published several artist books in collaboration with publishing house Edition Taube, besides others.

On 2 May 2015 the publication Post-Studio Tales, edited by Daniel Falb, Ulrike Gerhardt, Friedemann Heckel with John Beeson (Textem, Hamburg 2015), will be released at the architectural office of Something Fantastic. On this occasion a wall drawing made by Friedemann Heckel for Something Fantastic will be on view.

Book launch - Post Studio Tales

Saturday, 2 May 2015, 5pm

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