

Heart-Shaped Box

Greg Bogin / Jennifer Boysen / Kaz Oshiro / Blair Thurman

Exhibition from June 7th to July 26th 2014

from Tuesday to Saturday 11am-7pm

Opening Saturday, June 7th



The question of its factual or its fictitious flatness has never ceased to irrigate painting, whether we trace its use of perspective from Prehistoric times, to Antiquity to the Renaissance or, on the contrary, that we take interest in its forthcoming object status as it has been formulated since the fifties.

From the sixties, Frank Stella found an interest by slightly raising away the canvas from the wall, using a somewhat thicker frame, not to stretch towards the object but thus strengthening the idea of surface¹, this was no longer the flatness that was at stake but the surface and its qualities, sometimes even going as far as to forget the canvas that sub-tends² them. The idea of surface does not necessarily imply that of flatness; for Stella, paintings are three-dimensional objects even if we rarely look at them off the wall and, hence, all painted surfaces have a depth, even those that are monochromes³.

Oscillating between two spaces, the pictorial one, « of illusion », and the « real » one, within which stands the person facing them, Stella's paintings, just as Mc Cracken's planks that tends to exclude matter in favor of color or Judd's elements that search to evoke the latter as such, operate, on the occasion of their deliberate incursion in the physical space, a change of ontological status. Perhaps not quite paintings anymore but not necessarily sculpture, these « specific objects » use their(s) surface(s) suggesting the space that is behind, below, in front, around...

It is in this context of production of a first generation of artists who has been able to consider abstraction as part of art history that were born Blair Thurman (in 1961), Greg Bogin (in 1965) and Kaz Oshiro (in 1967). It is complicated and often dangerous to try to trace the lineage of influences thus we will simply set the facts. When they were still students, the dominant speech was that of a « death of painting », while Schnabel and Basquiat haunted the gallery walls. Blair Thurman then began looking for a « infinity effect⁴ » that he first materialized in the form of a loop which is also that of a motor circuit. His pieces always play with vacuum, asserting a kind of incompleteness whether by the necessary space between the neon tubes or because they enlighten - which is necessarily something other than themselves - or even by how his paintings show us the wall on which they are suspended or the floor on which they rest. In Greg Bogin, we still face a shapes' imbrication that sometimes overplay, sometimes deny the link they maintain with the content. In most series just as in the works we can see here, the presence of white is strong even if it is sometimes physically reduced. It is a painted white, full, clean, opaque and stable, far from the vortex that sometimes seems to create the openings in Thurman's canvases - the symbolical and material loop-hole of the imprisoning planar surface such as defined by Fontana about his slashed canvases. A window as open as closed, a flatness as artificial as factual. The same applies with entirely opposed processes for Kaz Oshiro, thus the volume of his pictorially reproduced objects being only a lure, the back they sometimes reveal brings the eye to stumble on the raw canvas. In his series of Still Life paintings, it is almost a second degree painting that he produces by a representation of monochrome as though broken, bent or slumped. But far from having been tortured or mistreated as Parrino's paintings, those ones are designed as such from the layout of the frame. In Jennifer Boysen's work, the youngest of the group (born in 1976), it is no longer only the frame that informs the canvas but found objects that sometimes come to slip in, or even replace it. Whether she stretches the canvas on metal plates reminiscent of automobile body parts, or that her frame appear trying to escape from themselves, to grow in space, she gives her painting a presence that seems to exceed main physicality : *would there be a ghost in the shell ?*

1 « When you stand directly in front of the painting it gives it just enough to hold it depth off the wall ; 're conscious of this sort of shadow, just enough to emphasize the surface. In other words, it makes it more like a painting and less like an object, by stressing the surface. » Frank Stella in « Questions to Stella and Judd », Interview by Bruce Glaser, Edited by Lucy R. Lippard », Minimal Art, A Critical Anthology, Edited by Gregory Battcock, PCU (1968), 1995, p. 162.

2 « I lose sight of the fact That my paintings are on canvas, and I just see my paintings. [...] If the visual act taking up on the canvas is strong enough, I do not get a very strong sense of the material quality of the canvas. It spells of disappear. » Ibid., P.160.

3 See Frank Stella interviewed by Michael Archer in 1985, in William Furlong, Speaking of Art, Phaidon, 2010 Side A, p. 72.

4 « Infinite Quest », Blair Thurman in conversation with Bill Powers, www.musemagazine.it, February 2014.