

DAVID RENGGLI

Mid-Century Consensus

Exhibition from April 7th to May 19th, 2018.
Opening on Friday April 6th, 6-9pm.



In David Renggli's practice, the notions of equilibrium and balance—understood in their physical, visual, but also conceptual senses—are principles that structure both production and reception. The forms are often based on a juxtaposition between referential worlds that contrast and are even incompatible in terms of value, mainly references to canonical expression of modern art and platitudes from the global design of cultural merchandise. Thus each work grows out of scattered, contradictory elements, while being subject to a principle of visual standardisation. References are expressed in an altered form that is sometimes ambiguous due to being overly affirmative, but it is usually reduced to a subliminal allusion. Through this game, the work becomes a medium that offers two or more entry points, playing upon phenomena of verisimilitude and subterfuge that simultaneously confirm and undermine each other. Through the plausible conjunction of contradictions, a double bind principle is established, in which each work succeeds in setting the parameters of its own autonomy, between self-reference and ironic tautology.

Following the same principle that governs the production of forms, the exhibition is shaped on the basis of a framework of juxtaposition between contradictory works, subject to a principle of visual balance. Renggli mixes clichés of interior design exhibition with institutionalised traditions of painting and sculpture exhibition, connecting these codes in order to vectorise a plausible framework of reception. The exhibitions operate as images of exhibition. Within this "aesthetic chamber" conferring natural authority upon the works and setting the parameters of certain reception reflexes, a controlled measure of accident and nonsense always creeps in.

David Renggli was born in 1974. He lives and works in Zurich. He has held solo exhibitions at the Kunstmuseum Bern; Kunsthalle Sankt Gallen; Museum Im Bellpark, Kriens; Museum Kunstraum, Baden and other institutions. His works have also been exhibited at the Haus fur Kunst, Altdorf; Rietberg Museum, Zurich; Migrosmuseum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; Klöntal Triennale, Kunshtaus, Klöntal; Kunsthaus Zurich; Kunstmuseum; Institut d'art contemporain, Villeurbanne; Städtische Galerie Ravensburg; Tate Britain, London; Fondation pour l'art contemporain Claudine et Jean-Marc Salomon, Annecy; Museum Bellerive, Zurich; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris.

Various series are featured in David Renggli's exhibitions. These series connect through their own principles, constituting the vocabulary of the artist's exhibitions. This principle of juxtaposing works in the exhibition replays the same principle of balance found in his works.

Developing works through the principle of series reinforces the latent duplicity of the forms, which offer themselves as unique instances integrated into an economy of replication. Although the seriality contributes to blurring the forms' independence by relating them to a generic principle, it also succeeds in creating an internal structure that gives each series an overall aesthetic autonomy.

The following "abecedary" describes a few constitutive elements of these series developed over the past decade, presented at different stages of their evolution in renewed combinations.

The *collages* are assembled by juxtaposing image fragments from celebrity and porn magazines, art books, directories or mail-order catalogues. Cut up, assembled and sometimes painted over, they are made in a few minutes through "just in time" production. The assemblage plays on the tension between the principle of equivalence generated by the printed sources' shared belonging to an economy of exposure, and the divergent cultural statuses of the representations they convey. Gradually distributed between varying degrees of source legibility and obliteration, the principle of visual balance gives the collage an autonomous aesthetic unity in which citation and semantic relations dissolve. Exhibited in series, their proliferation intensifies the source content's disintegration, creating a self-referential structure that establishes effects of similarity and correspondence between the collages.

The *Glass Paintings* are turned-over paintings created by applying transparent colours to a glass surface by means of broad, sweeping gestures. Because of the extreme fluidity of the paint applied to the glass surface, the shape has to be executed very quickly, reducing the amount of control and increasing the amount of "expressive" arbitrariness. Their immediate, almost advert-like visual impact and their straightforward spontaneity convey an exaggerated emotion, playing on the tension between affirmation and falsification. Although they involve the "real" processes of abstract painting, the Glass Paintings are also "images" of abstract paintings, in the dual sense that they not only evoke the kind of oversimplified representations of gestural painting that appear in popular imagery and decoration magazines, and but also their turned-over glass surface associates them with screens. Their serial presentation accentuates this confusion, placing the unique character of a "pure" gesture within an economy of replication and transfer where uniqueness and repetition coexist. The obscurity of abstract painting is doubly cultivated here both as a visual convention and as a way of questioning the permanence of the medium's natural authority.

The works in the *Body Language* series are created from assemblages of metallic tubes covered in a layer of glossy paint. Depending on the variation, they might be erected vertically or placed horizontally on concrete plinths. In these sculptures, references to the posture codification principles of antique and classical sculpture are linked to a repertoire of typical body poses from celebrity magazines. Their simplified, elliptical forms neutralise the expressiveness of body language in order to pass into the normativity of contemporary body-representation typologies. The industrial finish of their surface, similar to a car, and their stylistics reduced to the visual effectiveness of a sign that is nevertheless missing some information, establish an equivocal dialogue with the conventions of modern sculpture.

The *Floorplan Desire Paintings*, mixing acrylic painting and screen printing, play on the illusionistic enlargement of the weft of the pictorial medium. Made by superimposing a burlap grid and a flat wooden surface, the confusion between planes through effects of trompe-l'oeil and optical illusion creates several levels of perceptual engagement. Through the registers of the painted forms and the nature of their spatial interconnection, reference to certain modernist pictorial and decorative archetypes like cubist paper cut-outs are amalgamated with spatial projection techniques that evoke principles of radical design, while taking their arbitrariness to the limit. The grid's rough, impure materiality, recalling the coarse weave of a rug, creates a tension with its iconic status as an emblem of the optical purity of painting.

The *Daybeds* series, begun in 2014, connects references to modernist furniture to public sculpture and to the aesthetics of zen gardens. Consisting of a painted metallic structure and a smooth, concrete foundation, on the surface of which pebbles have been inserted, these bench-sculptures play on the contradictory connection between the raw, naturally shaped material and the intellectual values of modernist brutalism. Conceived as places of contemplation or conversation, the sculptures force the user to find an adapted body posture, experimenting with a position of physical and mental discomfort. By combining contradictory symbols associated with stone (romanticism, primitivism, modernism, urban furniture), the Daybeds establish a coexistence between the trivial and the intellectual, between clumsiness and perfection.

The *Good Vibe Gongs* are a series of monochrome murals made out of rounded, beaten, steel plates. A tension is established between their pitted surface, evocative of a skin or carapace, and the equalizing and homogenizing effect of the coloured surface, which generates uncertainty as to the nature of the material. Through these forms, contradictory references to the ideal of reduction and of monochrome painting's "degree zero" are amalgamated with primitivist, "amateur" stylistics. Unable to be re-contextualised within any stable referential world, they appear to be reduced to the arbitrariness of a visual sign devoid of any rooting, given over to a pure, "disinterested" contemplation.