



Rudolf Reiber 's Suspiria Mundane Most Beautiful

DATE: 29 MAY 2012

Approaching Payne Shurvell visitors are promptly informed that they cannot enter the gallery through the main entrance. The industrial courtyard does not offer any clues. Soon visitors are lead on a meandering route inside the building complex causing a slight feeling of disorientation. This theme of uncertainty and mild discomfort characterize Rudolf Reiber's first London solo exhibition, Suspira.

Upon reaching the back door of the gallery a sealed wooden crate stands by itself in the centre of the space. The crate houses a mysterious painting, a painting no one has seen except for the artist. What is on the 32x39cm board is unknown in every aspect except its name, 'Secret'. Even directors Joanne Shurvell and James Payne are in the dark regarding the painting's content. 'Secret' challenges the viewers' expectations by making the art object completely inaccessible. It's as if the crate becomes a performance piece taunting the viewers and exciting their curiosity – almost as an artistic interpretation of one of philosophy's great conundrums: Schrodinger's Cat.

The roundabout entrance to the gallery was not merely for effect but to protect 'Losing Ground', where the gallery floor becomes a piece of art.

Reiber spent weeks in the gallery space chipping away layers upon layers of paint to reveal the bottommost surface. The artist then polished the floor multiple times before covering it with resin resulting in a smooth, shining, and almost reflective surface. This laborious undertaking calls to mind the roles of addition and subtraction in the process of creation and highlights the beauty of a commonly overlooked plane. The desire to keep the floor pristine prohibits visitors from accessing the wooden crate of 'Secret'.

The expanse of the main gallery is left mostly vacant of objects (this, of course, does not translate to a vacuous space – there is an energy and an aura in the unknown and the unseen). By contrast, the small office and hallway become exhibition spaces to house several other works. 'No Room for Interpretation' features a series of hand gestures presumably stating the title in sign language. 'The Silence' consists of 54 sheets of A4 paper inscribed with Braille. A film also called 'The Silence' uses 3D imagery to project the Braille symbols. These three works involve language and communication but are intentionally difficult to read. There is an almost cruel irony in using Braille text that cannot actually be read by blind people and the juxtaposition of touch and sight causes tension between the viewer and the work.

Lastly Reiber's 'German Skies' series (2008) explores colour using lacquer used in German military planes as his medium. These works are simple colourfield paintings, but the choice of medium adds a violent undertone felt but not seen.

On the surface *Suspiria* is highly minimalistic, but the contrast of tender nuances and tension-filled silences create a dynamic and challenging atmosphere. Rudolf Reiber makes the mundane both beautiful and untouchable and renders language incommunicable.

Words Emily Sack © ArtLyst 2012