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...might be good



fluent-collab

Mark Flood

Peres Projects, Los Angeles
Through February 7, 2009

by Anna Mayer



Mark Flood - Entertainment Weekly, 2008 - Installation view - Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin & LA
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It is rare that Mark Flood's lace paintings are shown alongside his collage works and "broken paintings," but in the many rooms at Peres Projects' new Culver City location his modified signs and deconstructed canvases are interspersed with just as many lace works. Much has been made—often by Flood himself—of the considerable beauty and market-friendliness of the lace paintings, presumably in contrast to the so-called uglier, found aesthetic of the mixed media works. What emerges from this collective presentation of several of Flood's most commonly used strategies is a marked self-consciousness about the market that, in this exhibition, restricts the impact of individual works.

Though the press release for Entertainment Weekly stresses that the show's works "cover three decades of Flood's output," in actuality all the works were made in the last two years. The strategies used, however, are those the artist has employed since the early 1980s. This distinction is important when one considers the effectiveness of those strategies in this decade and going into the next. The art market is no less problematic than it was when Flood started seriously producing visual art in the mid 80s, and certainly painting's privileged status is still very much intact. However, presented as a whole, Flood's body of work

sets up a dichotomy between beautiful paintings and guerilla-style modifications of found objects. These two types of work paint a picture of an art world dominated entirely by a market interested in consuming only two types of goods: good-looking commodities and critiques of the system that the system immediately absorbs. Though this dynamic is worthy of attention, Entertainment Weekly pits the two "poles" against each other, reducing the work in the exhibition to generic painting versus generic collage, neither one operating beyond its reflection of the market.

It is no surprise, then, that a few fresh installation tricks specific to this 2008 exhibition pack the most punch. Flood has altered the lighting in the gallery in two spots: one small fixture installed on the floor is to be turned on at dusk in order to replace the natural light that fills part of two rooms during the day. In the next room back, another small fixture on the floor powers a fluorescent green bulb that illuminates a number of nearby works. (Rumor has it that the green light was salvaged from a Dan Flavin exhibition that once took place in Houston.) Audible in the back galleries is a Billie Holiday box set playing on a small, worn boom box. The CD player looks as though it could've been left by the exhibition's installation team. In other words, the lights and music are not nearly as seamlessly installed as the more official works in the exhibition.

These add-ons operate outside of the uneasy and restrictive continuum set up by the collages and lace paintings. Given Flood's affinity for purple prose, I don't hesitate to wax romantic about this aspect of the show: the supplemental music and lighting he provides were optimistic, fresh and felt as though they might lead the viewer towards modes of viewing other than cynical meta-/market- commentary or stalker queasiness. These installation choices feel the most genuinely punk. It's as if the light and sound point to the potential of the works they modify, suggesting that, while the light or music components may not (necessarily) be purchasable, the spirit they embody could indeed be transferable. Anna Mayer is an artist living in Los Angeles.



