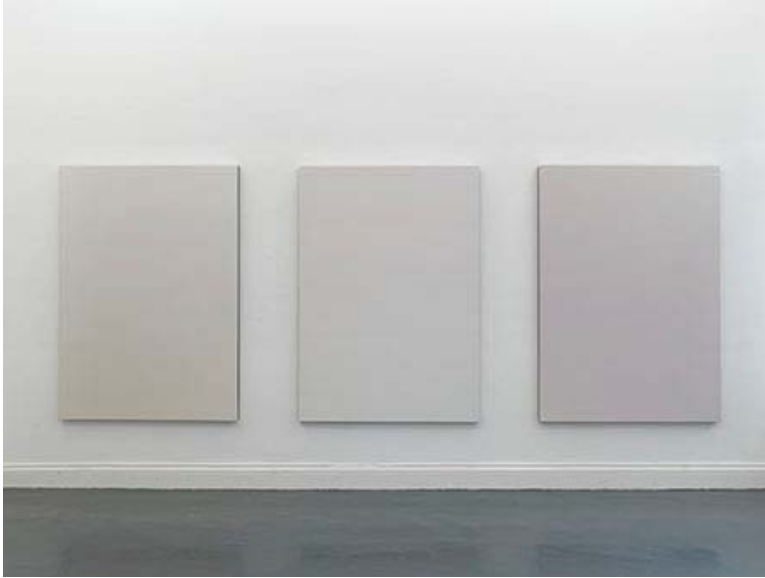


Liz Deschenes / Scott Lyall

SUTTON LANE AT KLOSTERFELDE BERLIN, GERMANY



It is ironic that Liz Deschenes and Scott Lyall – both representing London's Sutton Lane at Berlin's Klosterfelde, but also representative of a currently fashionable kind of art that is acutely sensitive to the conditions of art production and distribution – should have shown their work within such a market-orientated format as the gallery exchange. That their work comes in the form of compact, minimal and very saleable art objects is either risky or disingenuous, depending on your take.

The coherence of this two-person show depended on a mutual adoption of the Modernist monochrome, but neither artist makes more of it than parsimonious signs representing their medium's material specificity. In strategic terms, this parsimony is passive-aggressive. Arranged like blank screens, their monochromes were offered as neutral but knowing

counters of exchange to offset the gallery's context.

Deschenes's photograms – either black or white due to over- or under-exposure – are made of glossy photographic paper on sheets of aluminium, but her twist on a much-worked vein of photographic structuralism is that these panels double as architectural décor. *Shift/Rise # 23 & 24* (all works 2011) were two black rectangles vertically abutting and straddling the corner of a room, which would have blended seamlessly in a Modernist apartment, but looked sci-fi-modern under the ornate brown stucco of Klosterfelde's fin-de-siècle interior. Showing you nothing but your own reflection, the pastness of these photographic images became the present-ness of process, installation and, finally, commodification.

Lyall's paintings shared this anatomization of printed colour. Made by a high-tech process that maps ink dispersion onto canvas in fine layers, they recall Guyton's inkjet paintings, but make them seem comparatively lo-fi. Lyall's canvases are saturated with fine aggregate, softly phasing between shades of what the fashion industry would call 'nude'. The pedantic inverted commas this elaborate technique places around a series of bland objects make Deschenes's slick photograms seem austere in comparison. Lyall creates three-dimensional realizations from a set of dimensions and a chromatic code. A sheet of vinyl, *Eve 20111606/15521742*, affixed to the wall next to a painting of the same size and almost the same colour (nude 18), looked like its disembodied double, or the plan for its hanging, designating it as the object which arose from the accompanying digital specifications. A panel of MDF separating the stretcher from the wall performed a similar function, beefing up the objecthood of the painting to contrast with the thinness of the vinyl. Lyall both predicts and colludes with the market's need to have art distilled into narratives or recipes that can supplant the art they represent; it is this information, rather than the objects themselves, which constitutes the works' global accessibility beyond the local occasion of their exhibition.

Despite the formal resemblances, Deschenes's emphasis on medium-specificity sat uneasily alongside Lyall's pitching of his paintings as generic embodiments of a premeditated exhibition design. The virtual and actual suggestively undermined each other's claims. This tension points to a paradoxical vein running through each artist's work. The hint of misty illusionism in Lyall's canvases, or the semi-reflectiveness of Deschenes's photograms, contradict their reductive materialistic rendering of their respective media – the exposure of light-sensitive paper; the mechanical layering of colour – by intimating the potentiality of an image, but one that always remains blank. This void could be seen as the space left by the aloofness of the artists' assiduous critical objectivity, but it was too passive to resist becoming the kind of plush décor they set out to critique. However thoroughly the process of artistic production is deconstructed and disabused of its illusions, illusion asserts itself. Break an art object down into the basic structures that produce its act of seduction, and you end up with a seductive object. Turn structuralist realism around and you find market realism, on the other side of the same coin.