

PULP GAZETTE

Art Laboratory & Journal

REVIEWS STREET VIEW WORK N' LAB IDEAS NOW (ART IN BRUSSELS)

REVIEW @ XAVIER HUFKENS: EVERYTHING YOU CAN IMAGINE IS REAL



"Everything you can imagine is real": exhibition view

Group show with: David Altmejd, Marcel Broodthaers, Andrew Dadson, Latifa Echakhch, Michel François, Nikolas Gambaroff, Vincent Geyskens, Jacob Kassay, Elad Lassry, Robert Mapplethorpe, Ron Nagle, David Noonan, Jack Pierson, Ryan Sullivan, Lesley Vance, Ned Vena

The Xavier Hufkens Gallery is probably one of the most established in Brussels. It has strong credentials, manages the estates of important names and is still taking the risk of endorsing young artists, which is why perhaps it has managed to stay relevant for the past 30 years. Nevertheless, *Everything you can imagine is real* is quite a bold title for a group show that executes a delicate (and some would say slightly opportunistic) exercise: namely, building an evolving and eclectic journey where the works of dead, established and younger artists talk and respond to each other. Sometimes it works – other times, it's a disaster. Let's see what happens.

As you enter the gallery, the show opens directly on your left hand side: a large, luminous square space facing the reception/work area, where polite and stylish staff kindly ask to have my bag (how dare you!). After taking the (abundant and well-written) documentation, it takes me a few seconds to understand the floor-plan, adjust the map correctly, and put myself in proper viewing condition. The first works are by Jack Pierson (painted metal and wooden words), Elad Lassry (curious, dream-like photographs) and Andrew Dadson (the canvases overwhelmed with paint, then seemingly white-washed, virginal – but not quite). This provides an intriguing, though somehow subdued beginning to the show. Then I meet Michel François' *Instant Gratification* (a dentelle-like bronze fixed to the wall, on the verge between ripples, energy patterns, neuronal tissue) – and though I don't particularly like it, it manages to assert itself, its presence, to become self-evident and *incontournable*. There's then a small, vivid, very focused and well-executed painting by young artist Lesley Vance, which impresses most by the clarity of its purpose and intent. But for me, the journey really begins (or rather, I only suddenly realize I'm in the middle of one) when I view Mapplethorpe's triad of *Enrique Mazza's*, three black and white photographs where the young man searches his dressing. The perspective, intimacy and immediacy is such that I simultaneously become a witness and an accomplice – I become an eye – it feels slightly illicit, naughty and yet, I'm a companion, not a *voyeur*.

At that point, the whole *regard* of the show, that is, the way it views itself and what it invites you to see, seemed to change for me. I was extremely impressed by the painting of Ryan Sullivan, whose intricate chemistry of colors and material creates imaginary geographies on the canvas: it looks at once like a focus shot of some prehistoric skin, and a space-view of the earth's cracked surface and mountain ranges – in other words, it presents an extreme duality of perspectives poetically and chemically merged into one. This poetry of what is visible – or not – given or taken away, is further explored through two small Mapplethorpe which I found particularly beautiful and compelling.

The few steps that separate the first space from the second one, and in particular the hallway which hosts an intervention by Latifa Echakhch, is another turning point. Here, he artist has simply applied charcoal on parts of the walls – from the base up in varying heights. This first occurs on the wall leading up to the doorway that opens the second space: we see its continuation on one of the walls inside the space. Though I can only speculate whether it was the artist's intention, it appeared to me as a wonderful reflection on the idea of "doorway" as it relates to the passage between the subconscious to the conscious, or vice-versa, and the alteration it may cause to our perception of dimensionality and our conscience of space. Charcoal, of course, is primarily a means of drawing to artists – and drawings are two-dimensional, if only by the paper on which they are laid. But here, charcoal performs another function: underlining the third dimension, leading us from one space to the next through *a doorway*, which is philosophically elegant to say the least.

I think I have said enough already about the quality of this show – there's more to say, notably about the works of David Altmejd and David Noonan – but I wouldn't want you to think I've been paid (I have not). Let's just conclude by saying this: the exercise of combining dead, established and young artists is delicate, but Xavier Hufkens Gallery has managed to create a beautiful and thoughtful journey between very diverse works. As a result, the show manages to deserve its title: "Everything you can imagine is real". I don't know what it means, but the exhibition has me guessing.

@ Xavier Hufkens Galley until 28th May.


Review @ Xavier Hukens: "Everything you can imagine is real" | 2011 | NOW (ART IN BRUSSELS), REVIEWS | Media: everything you can imagine is real, latifa echakhch, xavier hufkens gallery | Tags: andrew dadson, art critic brussels, art exhibition brussels may, art exhibition review, art review brussels, brussels art exhibition, contemporary art brussels, david altmejd, david noonan, elad lassry, everything you can imagine is real, jack pierson, jacob kassay, lesley vance, marcel broodthaers, michel françois, ned vena, nikolas gambaroff, robert mapplethorpe, ron nagle, ryan sullivan, vincent geyskens, xavier hufkens gallery | Comments (0)

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