

Goldsmiths Curatorial Critique

Kate Shepherd at Galerie Lelong Paris

Posted by Bridget Donlonon February 25, 2009



The death of painting is announced with great fanfare every so often, only to be brought back to life later on with equal enthusiasm. Kate Shepherd is a painter who works steadily regardless of whether or not painting happens to be “alive”. Her current exhibition of new works at Galerie Lelong Paris reflect this steady investigation of the medium, testing the limits of her established visual language.

Those familiar with Shepherd’s body of work will recognize in this exhibition the wood panels finished with high-gloss industrial paint in nostalgia inducing colors providing a backdrop for fine white hand-painted lines. These self-imposed parameters have provided Shepherd with a formula in which she has been comfortable exploring ideas of implied physical space and references to classical linear perspective. It seems that she may have become antsy over the past year though, as these works are moving in an utterly new direction with new questions being interrogated within her signature format. The implied physical space has become implied physicality. The white lines no longer delineate boundaries of imagined interiors. They now form the skeleton of objects with weight, like *Moss Seated African* or *Red Caped Bird* for example. In other works, perhaps the most recent of this new series, the space inside the painting downright falls apart, such as in *Chimney Sweep, Blue*. The eye attempts to pull the line fragments together to form some kind of recognizable space or object, but there is none to be found. There is a vulnerability in these paintings that has always been present in Shepherd’s work, but has not always been evident. To put it analogously, these newer works are to the older as Romantic paintings of ruins are to Enlightenment architectural drawings.

Also on view are a series of sculptures made of wire coat hangers, wooden balls and walnuts, many of which are painted with the same high-gloss vibrant colors as the paintings. The sculptures operate individually as singular expressions of visual ballet, where the eye traces the arabesque of the line, pausing at the weighted pops of color in the wooden elements. When standing in front of the row of sculptures, the distance between the individual pieces becomes compressed and the individual parts make up one complete whole. The paintings are two-dimensional surfaces that depict something three-dimensional. Here, the sculptures are three-dimensional objects that can be read as something two-dimensional.

Once you get a feel for the parameters found in both the paintings and the sculptures, you begin to notice the subtleties that overlap both. The yellow wooden ball is a different hue of yellow than the in the painting *Yellow Shunning Figure*. The quirky meandering lines in *Black Baton A* show an attempt to make curved forms out of straight lines, the way that the artist has used straight wire to form curves with the sculptures. This play on the rules of art is what makes Shepherd’s work so appealing – that she seems to be able to thrive within these boundaries and look to push her work in a new direction, rather than be constricted.

Sculpture Painting, [Kate Shepherd](#) at [Galerie Lelong](#)
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