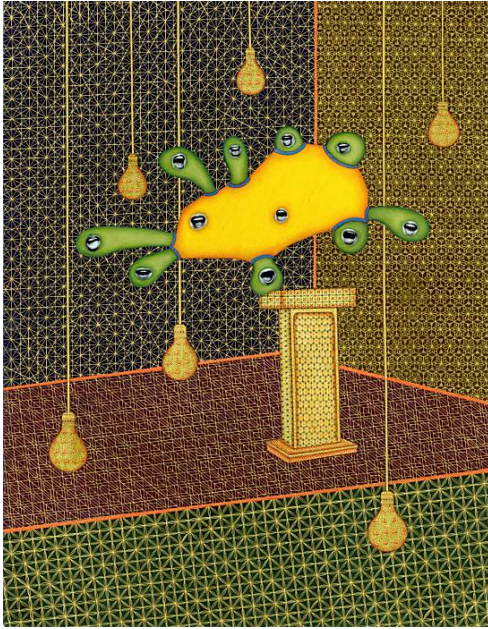


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Alexander Gorlizki echoes India at Berggruen

The paintings on paper of Alexander Gorlizki at Berggruen combine inventiveness and tight control. Gorlizki takes care that most of his works look like Indian miniatures because the typical qualities of those antiquities provide an aesthetic arena in which he can stage surreal comedy.

"I Have a Pre-Existing Condition" (2010) envisions a shallow, dais-like structure with a sort of podium. Six lightbulbs dangle into the space, each as minutely patterned with decorations as the walls and floor of the imaginary enclosure. Hovering above the podium, or poised upon it, we see a yellow blob that sports 11 chattering mouths.

As its title hints, this piece, like most of Gorlizki's, responds more to the contemporary world than that of, say, the Mughal court. The 11-mouthed yellow blob might be a figure for punditry or for today's messaging mania.

The lightbulbs evoke ideas dropping in from nowhere. They shed no light both as a sign of obtuseness and because Indian miniatures depict a shadowless world.

Although Gorlizki appears often to borrow elaborate decorative patterns directly from Indian art, in his hands they evoke not courtly luxury but the intricacies of the information and belief systems that underlie our reality.

To offset the fastidiousness he exercises in individual pictures, Gorlizki has blanketed a wall at Berggruen with sketches, collages and found pages, marked and unmarked, that conjure up a wild-eyed and rambunctious working process.

Mulling the disco ball: Many contemporary artists struggle to inject a worldview into their work. Not Los Angeles painter Dave Muller. His long involvement in the music scene brought him a ready-made gift: the disco ball.

Greenberg Van Doren Gallery

NEW YORK

Most of his new paintings at Anthony Meier describe mirrored spheres, their facets reflecting directional, fragmented glimpses of their surroundings, neatly suggestive of the way we piece a viewpoint together. He describes the balls, or portions of them, in acrylic on pages large enough to let him create a planetary sense of scale.

"Desert Hot Springs" (2010) winks with snatches of sky, palms, architecture and ... well, it's not easy to say what else. What looks like literal description effects allusions to cubism and satellite surveillance, all undercut by the comical notion of a disco ball as a window on the real.

If "Desert Hot Springs" counts as a landscape, then Muller's "Celebrity Top Tens" figure as cross-sectional portraits, reducing subjects to their tastes in music, as represented by 10, more or less, spines of favorite LP album covers.

Muller made some of the work on view with the Meier space in mind, which redoubles the power of his images.

Rantanen: deadpan walking: Visitors to Los Angeles conceptualist Chadwick Rantanen's show at Jancar Jones may leave feeling that they have eavesdropped on a conversation that began without them.

Rantanen's work anticipates viewers who have seen and thought about the convergence in historical hindsight of Pop and minimal art, and who see no conflict between humor and gravity, or critical thinking and shopping mall taste.

Low along two walls, Rantanen has placed a series of tilted, etched glass panels that look carefully finished and uncertainly functional. Standard metal fixtures, differently positioned in each case, keep them suspended.

The ensemble may suggest something half-remembered from a visit to Home Depot, yet the sculptures' deliberate confusion of storage and display has a pedigree in the work of older contemporaries such as Joseph Beuys (1921-1986), Imi Knoebel and Lawrence Carroll.

A red "Telescopic Pole" (2010) runs vertically through Jancar Jones' tiny space, absurdly collecting associations to expandable shower curtain rods, pole dancing and scaffold reinforcements.

The "Pole's" pretense of holding up the ceiling plays poignantly against the sliced tennis balls that cap both ends of it. They bring irresistibly to mind the makeshift brakes, in the form of cleaved tennis balls, sometimes fitted to walkers used by the elderly.

Then there is the tennis balls' faint reminiscence of Pac-Man...

Rantanen's work bravely mingles antic aspects such as these without apology or explanation, evidently mindful that relevance and absurdity in contemporary art frequently stand back to back. **KENNETH BAKER**