

# Art in America

November 2007

## Kevin Zucker at Greenberg Van Doren

Kevin Zucker's previous paintings, of austere interiors, were bleached, spare and seductively atmospheric. In his recent exhibition, "Search Within Results," he moved beyond his fascination with structural spaces and into the accumulation and associative meaning of objects. Zucker examines how we receive information—from easily accessible, impersonal sources like Internet search engines—and how we assign significance to objects.

*Encyclopedia* (all works 2006), the exhibition's largest piece

at over 13 feet across, shows a series of industrial storage shelves filled with seemingly random objects—a bicycle, a birdhouse, a highchair. Zucker downloaded the images from the Internet and transferred the printouts to the canvas; their impersonal matte gray makes them come across more as definitions than portraits. They combine to form a smooth surface with an almost marbled quality that has an aged look, a sort of exhausted erosion. It's consistent with the engrossing surfaces of the artist's earlier work—without revealing how they're made, they threaten to deteriorate before us, like memories.

Zucker's paintings are growing denser, incorporating abstract planes of solid color and rigid geometric orthogonals. In *Anything (error type-41)*, a group of shelves converge in a gray cluster. They are partially obscured by an irregular open grid that, painted in black, recalls the spatial authority of Mondrian. Almost hidden on the shelves are transfers of boxes tied with copper-toned ribbons. This is a storeroom we cannot access, with gifts that have never been given.

The shelf motif returns in Zucker's first series of drawings, executed on graph paper. Each notebook-sized sheet depicts a shelf holding various found photographs and illustrations: a city skyline, an anatomical study, a crashed car. Catalogues of interplay, the collages are lighter and more airy than his paintings, but have the same friction between image and space.

The collages work better than the original photographs of such traditional still-life subjects as vases, costumes and man-

nequins placed on and around large studio tables. Titled after universities and art schools (*Columbia, Cooper Union*), they show us what art students see, and encourage us to think about outmoded art traditions. But, presented so matter-of-factly, they lack Zucker's conceptual edge and his usual visual elegance.

Zucker contends that we move amid overwhelming cycles of information, endless tides of data that we struggle to decipher any way we can. It will be interesting to see what this talented young artist chooses to pursue.

—David Coggins

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Kevin Zucker: *Encyclopedia*, 2006, acrylic and transfers on canvas, 96 by 160 inches; at Greenberg Van Doren.

