

Test Transmission

General Idea, Tobias Kaspar & Patricia Dauder

Ah, jogging. The perennial pastime of the bourgeois bore; at once the icon of suburban absurdity and earnest, Beckettian perseverance. Here, in the work of Swiss artist Tobias Kaspar, the word is fractured and dispersed through space, semiotics exchanged for sculpturalism. Its meaning scattered and its connotative force diffused, the letters 'jogging', cut from familiar images of urban exercise, sit isolated on the white walls of the gallery; objects, not icons. The emphasis on the three-dimensionality of these works—the thickness of the wood, the stark contrast of the rubber backing against the gallery's white walls—insists that their graphic function is made secondary to the aesthetic possibilities they present.

Yet this is no formal exercise. While the objects are striking, cohering slick, glossy images from the pages of some hypothetical lifestyle magazine with the irreparably recognizable forms of the English alphabet, their primary operation is the disruption of context. In this action, Kaspar's tactic is physically simple but conceptually sophisticated. Literally pulling the word apart and compromising its semiotic unity, the viewer finds himself 'within' language; sense-making becomes a physical process as the viewer is drawn through the space in search of some graspable

'whole'. Finding only fragments—of words and images—they are forced into an uncertain position, left questioning first the operation of language, and then reevaluating the intention of the artist and his once-familiar subject.

If disruption is the central conceit of Kaspar's practice, it is the antithesis to Patricia Dauder's. Her watercolours are rigorously and earnestly constructed, the brushstrokes simple and naked. Yet Dauder's process is derived from contemporary media experience as much as it is from an anachronistic fixation on physical materials.

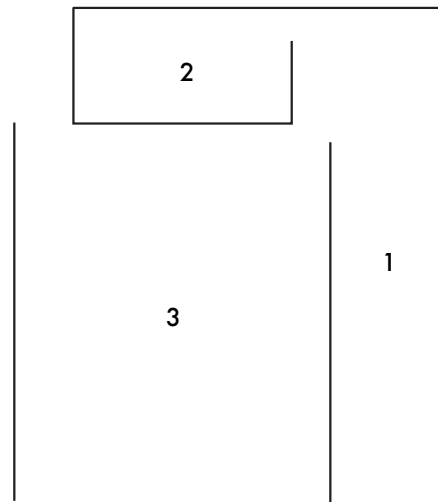
Over the past decade, Dauder has worked with film, particularly Super 8 and 16mm, recording such subjects as waves breaking on a beach. In the repetition of horizontal brushstrokes in her watercolour works, there is the suggestion of waves being tracked through the image, the process of painting them alluding to their cyclical nature. The breaks in the lines and the grain of the paper make reference to the quality of the film stock itself; Dauder's painted images, like her filmed ones, are 'incomplete', and attention is drawn to these gaps in the visual information she presents. Yet this tactile quality is the source of the paintings' pull; the abstract, intangible notion of the contemporary media experience is manifested in a

traditional, accessible manner, its aesthetic possibilities articulated through the historical lexicon of Modern painting.

The media experience is also at the centre of the work of Canadian artist collective General Idea, whose 1979 video *Test Tube* exploits television as a stage for artistic experimentation, seeking to develop 'formulae for making art consumable'. Testing the possibilities for mass communication in an artistic context, the group deconstructs well-worn television formats with an anthropological (though inevitably ironic) bent, ultimately seeking to creatively corrupt mainstream media in the name of artistic liberation.

As with Tobias Kaspar, playful disruption of social and cultural convention provides the impetus for the video. Revolution becomes a central theme, as does the power of media and, in turn, the possible response of the artist. This cyclical process of influence and agitation, of evaluation and reevaluation, unites the works collected in *Test Transmission*. Ultimately, the viewer is confronted with displacement and disruption and invited to reconsider the unattended social codes that define their daily lives.

Arron Santry



1 General Idea, *Test Tube*, 1979. Courtesy Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), New York.

2 Patricia Dauder, from left: *Moon*, 2006/ *Green 1 Teahuppo*, 2010/ *Red 1 Teahuppo*, 2011/ *Total Black*, 2006/ *Leaf*, 2006/ *Leaf and highway*, 2006/ *Negative Wave*, 2010/ *Green 2 Teahuppo*, 2010/ *Red 2 Teahuppo*, 2011. Courtesy the artist and ProjecteSD, Barcelona.

3 Tobias Kaspar, *G, J, O, I, G, N, G*, 2010. Courtesy of the artist and Silberkuppe, Berlin.

ARTSPACE

Opening hours: Tuesday – Friday
10 – 6pm, Saturday 11 – 4pm
See www.artspace.org.nz for talks,
performances and screenings