

FEAR OF REFLECTION

The work of Peter Bonde at Natalia Hug Galley, Cologne. April 5 – May 24, 2014

Unlike the other visual disciplines, painting is always artificial, that to say that it cannot be (or be mistaken for) a 'real' thing outside of its context as an art object. Its function, so to speak, is first and foremost, inextricably intertwined with the 'creative act' and it is therefore impossible to create a painting without first engaging creativity itself, any resultant 'function' within the object is always relative to this. It is upon this 'object' that the actions of Peter Bonde reside. Not inside nor out but on, there, right in front of you without perspective, tricks or illusions.

Continuing Bonde's ongoing proclivity for painting onto anything other than the traditional canvas and stretcher, the works in the main body of this show feature swift and expressive, chromatic brushstrokes rendered upon mirrored foil. As is so in much of Bonde's past work, the desire to refuse the traditional support structures associated with his discipline is at once iconoclastic yet somehow transcendental. Internally destructive, the broadly abstract gestures recall a kind abandon associated with the excess of a culture destroying itself from within. However, unlike the religious iconoclasm of the Reformation for example, the temperament of Bonde's image-destruction is one of a much more complimentary nature rather than it is the product of sectarian deutes. It is not an attempt to disrespect images and that which they represent, rather it is a bid to alleviate the stoic nature of images from their context as representations of something existing in history and to recuperate them as pure objects re-indexed by random gestures rather than by rigid categorical interpretations.

Bonde himself refers to this process as 'mudification', an adjustment that deliberately de-crystallizes the subject (that which is painted onto) into something much less precise and definite. Something that is now forced to inhabit the muddy and murky waters of the art-object, where visibility, so to speak, is low and where things become slippery and out of focus.

Expanding the notion of painting onto images, it is perhaps arguable that the brushstrokes themselves are not painted upon the mirror (as an object) but upon the reflection itself. A treatment that declares the reflection as an object in its own right rather than a mere representation of the thing(s) being reflected. This again echoes Bonde's sentiments that there are no illusions in his work, that it is all surface, however the constant interplay between the viewer at their reflection (or lack thereof) unquestionably adds a dimension of introspection that, for the viewer at least, implies something that goes beyond 'surface' alone. In this sense, the works move into the more psychoanalytical territory of image/self-image and the self-actualizing nature of thought itself.

Thoughts, like the reflection between two mirrors, are the constantly fluctuating product of action and reaction, the result of a mind thinking about the existence it sees and feels and then re-applying that newly created knowledge to that which it sees and feels; a neurologically mutable *Mise en abyme* in which the gesture of thought and the residue of knowledge are reflected and projected into infinity. This series of works, often displayed in relation to each other, beg a similar interpretation. The mirrored surfaces can be seen as a kind of collective psyche, a psychological space that we share not just with ourselves and each other as viewers, but also with reality at large, a space where existence is literally projected and reflected into infinity. In this zone, the gestures of Bonde's brushstrokes act almost as external influences analogous to those thoughts we have that seem to come from elsewhere. Subconscious, extraneous and alien, though wholly our own, they come creeping out of the cracks and corners of our minds, just outside the reach of perception and apprehension, yet all pervasive and consuming nonetheless.

It is these thoughts that personify the 'other' within ourselves and this otherness is never more so experienced than when we look into the mirror only to be met by the gaze of the familiar stranger that is ourselves. Perhaps this is the fear that Bonde is referring to, the uncomfortable feeling that comes when one is uncannily dislocated by an encounter with ones own reflection. Better to paint that out than to deal with it.

G. Leddington, 2014

Peter Bonde (b. 1958) graduated from the Royal Danish Academy of Art (1976-82). He was a professor at the Royal Danish Academy of Arts's painting school from 1996 to 2005 and represented Denmark at the Venice Biennale in 1999 (with Jason Rhoades). In 1990, Bonde had a solo exhibition at Galerie Sophia Ungers in Cologne where he lived for a period of time. The artist is represented in all major Danish art museums including The Danish National Gallery, ARoS, the art museum Trapholt, Esbjerg Art Museum, as well as Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany and in private collections Elgiz Collection, Turkey and Axa Northern Stern, Cologne.