

November 2011: Art2 at FLAG Art Foundation

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Installation view, 2011 Courtesy of FLAG Art Foundation, New York. Photo by: Genevieve Hanson

Multiple Artists: Art2

The Flag Art Foundation

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Art2 at the FLAG Art Foundation reads as a sampling of western art history interpreted through both conflicting and converging historical narratives. The gallery has compiled the work of artists as diverse as Roy Lichtenstein, Duane Michals, and Richard Pettibone all of whom have quoted from the art historical canon to different theoretical ends. Thus the concepts of these works also bear a diverse scope, ranging from issues of racial and gender subversion to humor and frustration surrounding art-world politics. The viewer is invited to engage in a constant search for the images' inspiration, but the most common question raised is that of authorship.

The battle between post-modernism and modernism begins with an expansive painting by Roy Lichtenstein, his 1985 *Figures in Landscape*, based on the pastoral figural work of Cézanne. Strikingly distinct from his comic strip paintings, *Figures in Landscape* marks a break in Lichtenstein's struggle with the modernist brushstroke that he began in the 1960s and pits high modernism against its antithesis. However, his trademark Ben-Day dots maintain a certain level of restraint and recognition. By this means he marks the mood of the exhibition, which explores the relationship between image and source, and is punctuated by the humor of Jim Torok's wit and Duane Michals' satire.

The many layers compiled within the exhibition's included works can potentially displace the original concept for the image, which is already twice, and sometimes thrice removed. One such example is the Ken Solomon's *Google-Portrait Gerhard Richter*, (2009) for which the artist replicated a Google search page screenshot using watercolor

and gouache. Like Claes Oldenberg had done decades before, Solomon touched upon the capacity of the artistic medium and scale to render the mundane precious. However, Solomon adds another step: Gerhard's paintings of photographs, accessed in thumbnail size on a computer screen are once again removed from their original source in Solomon's painting.

Some of the exhibition's connections mix messages and arrangements to effect. Such an example is Barry X Ball's sculpture *Purity* (2008-10), which concerns the idea of improving upon perfection through alteration of materials and updated processes, from eighteenth century marble cutting to the state of art technology. The sculpture negotiates the space between Glenn Brown's demonic version of French Academician Jean-Baptiste Greuze's *Innocence* (c. 1790) and Kehinde Wiley's *Ghetto-Baroque* allusion to Christ. Although *Purity*'s concept conflicts with the racially motivated subversion of Wiley, Awol Erizku, and Naoto Kawahara, its thoughtful and centralized placement brings to mind the exhibition's questioning of authorship. In this sculpture, Ball directly references Antonio Corradini's *La Purità* (c. 1720-25) and combines computerized scanning, modeling, and milling with traditional hand-sculpting, thus optimizing the original artist's inspiration.

Art2 appears to be an apt title for this exhibition, which addresses the different faces of appropriation in all of its cleverly veiled and sometimes prismatic layers. Because it neither confirms nor denies the existence of an overarching metanarrative, the exhibition denies the viewer any kind of coherent, teleological system. It does however, provide an intriguing combination of ruminations on similar sources, bringing to mind the multitude of ways in which contemporary artists may subvert or exploit the art historical canon.