PAPERWEIGHT
from Swill Children
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Social Studies Workbook by Sara Greenberger Rafferty and The OG Vol. 3 by
Amy Sillman

Here are two zines that are part of the artists’ larger body of work.
This pocket-sized zine mimics a class workbook, down to the newsprint stock. Rafferty uses the format of homework exercises (filling in the blank, matching words to pictures) to look at how we internalize social behavior. The opening lines sum it up – “Everyone learns from others. Grown-ups learn from other grown-ups and from children. Children learn from other children and from grown-ups.”
I first thought the text was borrowed, but Rafferty’s sense of humor emerges in small moments. One exercise asks to pair emotions (angry, proud, lazy, embarrassed, excited) to situations, including “Amanda had not shoplifted at the mall in the five weeks since she got caught. Her parents gave her a gift certificate to the Gap.” The interactive aspect of the zine is also appealing – it would be fun to see how people fill it out.

*The OG Vol. 3* by Amy Sillman, 2010
This zine debuted at Sillman’s show “Transformer (or how many lightbulbs does it take to change a painting?)” at Sikkema Jenkins earlier in the spring. Copies were stacked on a shelf with a coffee tin requesting $1 per zine. Only familiar with her paintings, I had no idea she made zines, especially since their lo-fi nature contrasts the monumental history of oil painting.

The press release explained the pairing – “For the past year, Sillman has included a new edition of this zine with every new group of paintings she makes; it is a form that allows her paintings to speak, while comically subverting the solemnity that (intentionally or unintentionally) can enshrine shows of abstract or semi-abstract painting.”

The zine verbalizes some of Sillman’s attitudes toward painting. “Train of Thought” (partially photographed here) is a timeline that merges the light bulb’s invention with the emergence of “Painting is Dead” and conceptual art. Sillman sees painting and conceptual art as historically (and falsely) positioned against each other, and compares it to a mind-body split. She attempts to dismantle this with a symbol of a fist inside a light bulb, to suggest that physical and intellectual experience (esp. of art) do not have to be separated.

Light bulbs are a central motif. There are pages of bulbs found in works by Picasso, Guston, Oldenberg and others. As someone who loves looking at artists’ source material, I enjoyed the zine’s insight into what Sillman was reading and looking at in the studio.
There’s also the pull-out poster “Some Problems in Philosophy” that abbreviates the “good” and “bad” ideas of canonical thinkers (sorry, male only.)

This entry was written by Milano, posted on August 6, 2010 at 2:11 pm, filed under Book Review, Uncategorized and tagged Amy Sillman, Sara Greenberger Rafferty. Bookmark the permalink. Follow any comments here with the RSS feed for this post. Post a comment or leave a trackback: Trackback URL.