

Old Truths & New Lies

by Chloe Wilcox

RACHEL UFFNER GALLERY | JUNE 7 – JULY 31, 2015

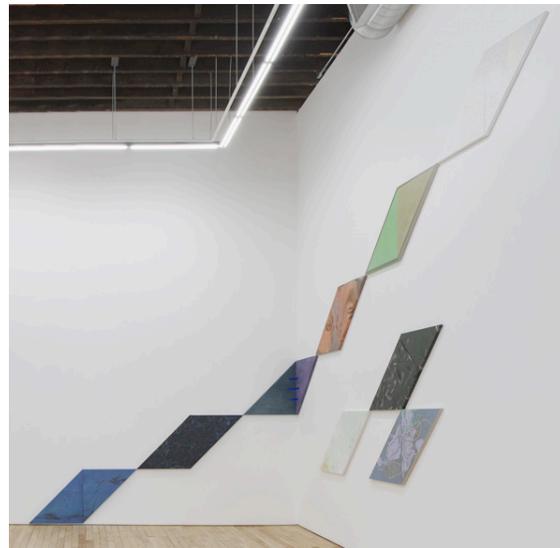
It is not fully evident upon entering Rachel Uffner Gallery which of the bright, playful artworks are telling “old truths” and which “new lies,” or what those truths and lies might be. The works by nine artists run the gamut from textile, silkscreen, digital printing, and collage to mixed-media sculpture and painting, photography, and found objects, but nothing’s quite in its place. Media are mixed, but most of the artists seem more interested in riffing and exploring the fringes of their medium of choice (textile and painting are favorites) than in eliminating boundaries between media. As a result, the show is conceptually hard to pin down. This could be due to the breadth of materials included, but I suspect the problem has more to do with too many artists juggling too many “truths” and “lies,” an issue manifested in an unbridled enthusiasm for quotation and clipping from art history and pop culture.

The exhibition is a free-for-all of art historical references, specifically to the history of modernism. Mae Fatto’s three collages—*Picasso to Go* (2015), *Man Ray, Flash Art, 1987* (2015), and *Half Truths: Collage with Lichtenstein, Picasso, Matisse, Stella, maybe, and some other Modernists* (2015)—excerpt and re-piece images of the named artists’ work in a replay of Dadaist photomontage. The lovely saturated hue of Annabeth Marks’s blue painting could be Yves Klein’s IKB 31; Emi Winters’s hanging rug, a Cubist cut-up of a Bauhaus motif. In some of the work, like Marks’s painting, the formal allusions are subtle and secondary, the life of the project located more in the absorbing saturation and gradations of tone and her undulating canvas. Multiplied exponentially in the show, however, this list acts as a reminder of the ways in which art and its world can be a black hole of self-referentiality—art perpetually punning on art.

These artists also share a tongue-in-cheek enthusiasm for quotidian imagery and objects of contemporary life: spots of a pepperoni pizza abstracted into neon purple and pink polka-dots in Blaze Lamper’s “Snack Shapes” (2015); a white Wonder Bread loaf; a five-dollar umbrella; earbuds; cigarettes; graffiti; a hotel toothbrush; a fridge and ironing board; Tecates; and, in Lucas Knipscher’s *Burroughs, Evans, Levine...* (2015), the *Downton Abbey* character Lady Sybil’s signature cloth.

Sprinkled throughout the show, these gestures, like the *Downton Abbey* footnote in particular, feel gimmicky and precious; an undertone of over- or underworked cuteness hovers near much of the work. The problem is not so much the formal, historical, or cultural mixing and mingling, but rather the underlying and unanswered questions of “why?” and “to what end?” Many of the pieces seem aimless, just a gathering of references (sometimes incredibly specific) or partake in formal moves without direction or cohesion.

This is not the case for all the work, and two pieces, radically different in form and



“Old Truths and New Lies,” Rachel Uffner Gallery, 2015.
Top: Ana Cardoso, *Oblique*, 2015. Acrylic and oil on cotton and linen canvas, digital print on cotton, 186×372 in. Bottom: Ana Cardoso, *On/Off*, 2015. Acrylic and oil on cotton and linen canvas, digital print on cotton, 62 × 24 × 44 in.

Rachel Uffner Gallery
170 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002

+1 212 274 0064
info@racheluffnergallery.com
racheluffnergallery.com

composition, move beyond the intricacies of internal formal dialogue to effectively engage with the viewer, the gallery space, and larger questions about art's transformational power. Ana Cardoso's suite of parallelogram paintings—*Oblique* (2015) and *On/Off* (2015)—drift elegantly across the far corner of the downstairs gallery in a sculptural sweep, the traditional rectangular canvas broken into its constituent triangles and scrambled into a more unconventional rhombus. Some of these paintings, abstract or monochromatic, dwell comfortably in the language of their medium, but others flirt with photography and textile pattern printing, perhaps an “oblique” reference to painting's material connection to textile: paint and color on canvas or linen. Cardoso's paintings evoke Frank Stella's polygon and protractor paintings, and the white and green monochromatic canvases and light flurried abstractions gesture toward the long history of modern painting. But her canvases do their own work, immediately altering their viewer's sense of vision, scale, and space. *Oblique*'s long linear rise refuses the usual juncture-like experience of observing discrete artworks in a gallery, offering instead a syncopated ebb and flow of images. Each canvas tapering into the next, the viewer becomes involved in a dictated progression of abstraction and images, colors and compositions muting and transforming along the way.

Yoni Zonszein's installation for his piece *Paper Stones from The Metropolitan Museum of Art from the Great Temple of the Aten at Amarna and Related Fragments, Dynasty 18, reign of Akhenaten, ca 1353–1336 B.C. / 2012–2015 A.D.* instigates a different kind of

transformation, bringing together lived quotidian space and the gallery environment. The paper stones appear in kitchen cabinets alongside the artist's refrigerator, smudged and pinned with notes, a fading frond, and, on the day I visited, a cluster of empty beer cans perched atop. While these stones constitute the ‘heart’ of the piece, it was these attendant objects that drew my attention. In the gallery, the dissonance of these objects and their setting forces you to reconsider them both formally and, for lack of a better word, meaningfully.

Sure, this might be a riff on the classic Duchampian move (it's art because I say so, and by virtue of its placement in this institution), but the question these objects pose is less about the perimeters and status of art *qua* art (because in this day and age of anything goes, who even knows anymore), and more about the potential livelihood and auratic power of even the most mundane and functional (or dysfunctional) of our

worldly possessions as they really are—dirty, used up, gathered in the corner. These things lead a double life as both quotidian object and artwork; placed not in the center like a sculpture, but to the side where a gallery's fridge might actually be, the Duchampian transformation remains nicely incomplete. Their presence there is an invitation to consider how the things we touch, handle, and use daily are imbued with their own mysterious meaning simply for the fact of their centrality to our lives, and how this might lend something to artworks displayed in their midst. It took me a few minutes to decide if the fridge really was a part of the show. If nothing else, it was nice to have something so untidy and puzzling around.



Yoni Zonszein, *Paper Stones from The Metropolitan Museum of Art from the Great Temple of the Aten at Amarna and Related Fragments, Dynasty 18, reign of Akhenaten, ca 1353–1336 B.C./2012–2015*. Indurated Limestone, Diorite, Red Quartzite, Kitchen Cabinet, Tungsten Lamp, Black Toned Xerox Prints, White Bond Paper, 97 × 96 × 27 in.