

SIMILAR BEGINNINGS, VERY DIFFERENT ENDS

Britta Konau - 2015
ICON Contemporary Art
The Portland Phoenix
CLAIRE SEIDL

ICON Contemporary Art's pairing of works on paper and Mylar by Amparo Carvajal-Hufschmid and Claire Seidl highlights parallels and differences. Seidl, who is also a painter and photographer, divides her time between New York and Rangeley, and Hufschmid lives in Alton, N.H. In both artists' work, art developments from the past resurface, as happens a lot these days. Minimalism for Hufschmid, abstract expressionism for Seidl. Both use layering as a pictorial strategy and both start their process with print-making.

Despite these parallels in approach, the resultant artwork couldn't be more different from each other. Hufschmid's spare, geometric forms arrive at a perfect equilibrium, a dynamic that encompasses all three dimensions. Seidl's modulated fields of color and gestural abstraction do not have such a final destination but rather arrive at an immersive state of being, a cessation of activity achieved through fine calibration.

Looking at Seidl's "The Other Half" one can almost hear the sucking sound of the Mylar being pulled away from the oiled printing surface. Laying down one or more basecoats like this, Seidl proceeds with additional applications of fields of color or linework, half-way controlling the attraction and repellency based in the physical properties of her materials. Remaining beads of oil read like variegated ben-gay dots of shading and pictorial depth. "Pie in the Sky" makes full use of Mylar's smooth, minimally absorbent surface, which results in a watery dispersal of ink that is governed by variations in absorption and rejection. Layers of color are simultaneously visible and make for rich, often glistening surfaces.

Seidl's best work features nothing but lines or lines that are subdued by transparent fields of color. In "To," pronounced, black horizontal lines and smudged gray ones play intriguingly with our perception of space. The markings appear to reverberate, flickering back and forth between fore- and background.

Most subtle and compelling is "Half Full," which too foregoes color for a wide range of grays for its effect.

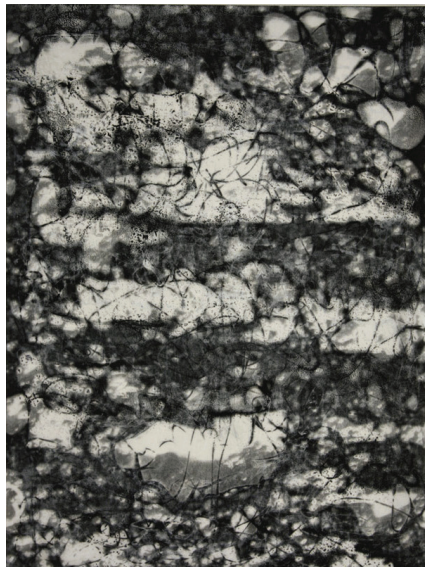
Its material marks are interwoven into a loose network of thin layers, more pronounced swirls and areas of beading and iridescence, as if they were going in and out of focus or rising above and submerging below the surface. In these works Seidl expertly utilizes control and its release, visibility and shrouding. They are some of the best works I have seen by the artist.

Levels of visibility also play a major role in Hufschmid's "Articulation Series," which, at its most basic, consists of assembled woodblock prints on gampi paper the artist makes herself. And they are literally "woodblock" prints, utilizing an uncarved square of wood as their matrix. For a second printing that square is rotated so that in the final print, wood grains interweave like the warp and weft of fabric and make for a more interesting interplay of colors. Layering the transparent paper allows for partial visibility and interaction between the colored squares. Where they seemingly touch (although on separate sheets of paper) or transgress onto an adjacent sheet, that's where the pieces' focal points lie.

Hufschmid's work is more about positioning and spatial relations than process. This becomes most apparent in works that incorporate a square printed over two sheets which are then separated. The severe geometry of "Articulation Series #65" is interrupted by such a "wound or tear," with a glimpse of the orange-pink square underneath animating the composition, making it vulnerable almost.

The rectangular sheets of paper, and with them the printed squares, are arranged at dynamic angles that give rise to a sense of precariousness and movement, even when the squares are perfectly lined up horizontally. In Hufschmid's sophisticatedly restrained pieces image and support equally constitute the work of art centered around completion and disruption.

The exhibition of works on paper and mylar by Amparo Carvajal-Hufschmid and Claire Seidl at Icon Contemporary Art exhibition has been extended through Sept. 26 but the gallery will be closed for five days, Sept. Sept. 17-21.



THE OTHER HALF



TO



HALF FULL