

Dream Mechanics

Mary Sherman

curator Tamar Tembeck

November 5 – December 17, 2016

D*ream Mechanics* presents a selection of works from the past decade by American artist Mary Sherman. Though solidly grounded in her practice as a painter, Sherman's aesthetic approach proposes a sensory and spatial expansion of the traditional territory of painting. By introducing diverse kinetic and auditory elements to the experience of her works, Sherman manages to give flesh to the unsuspected synesthesia of the painterly medium.

Sherman's production has often been described as being at the threshold of 20th and 21st century formal preoccupations. At the height of 20th century American Modernism, painting was famously thought to exalt the two-dimensional qualities that are proper to it, according to the art critic Clement Greenberg. For Sherman, however, her abstract painterly constructions present a polysensorial potential that rather begs a more expansive approach. All the while referring to the history of modern art in her works (notably through her choice of titles, which pay tribute, amongst others, to the Dadaists), Sherman's practice is distinctly contemporary and reliant upon present-day technologies. Her projects generally include abstract paintings characterized by generous impasto, and arranged in compositions that are either modular (*The White Painting(s)*, 2004) or mechanical (*Nocturne*, 2007-08; *At Heart, Spike Jones*, 2002-03/2011; *Le matin de la nuit / Ballet mécanique*, 2008; *Eri, After Dark*, 2011-12). Other works, which she develops in collaboration with audio artists, include prominent sound elements that add melodious layers to the pure bruitisme of their mechanical articulations (*Waiting for Yves*, 2010-11; *Nocturne; Eri, After Dark*).

Sherman's project *Delay*, 2012-14, shown at OBORO earlier this year, pushes the exploration of the sensory links between eyes and ears even further, by featuring a spatialized sonification of a small painted work. In her most recent installation, *The Fugue*, 2015-16, which is being premiered at this exhibition, it is the paintings themselves that behave

as music would: five miniature white paintings are motorized and choreographed to echo the musical structure of a fugue, alternately appearing, disappearing, reversing and reappearing between staggered aluminum structures that are suspended on a wooden platform.

The works chosen for this exhibition specifically highlight Sherman's expansion of the painterly territory by incorporating both kinetic and audio arts, practices that are close to OBORO's core interests. The integration of sound to Sherman's production—an approach that began with her 2008 installation *Ballet mécanique*—offers a new means to translate, and in a sense, amplify the inherent tactile and sensory qualities that she perceives in painting. The mechanical animation of her painted objects also gives them a mobile and sculptural presence in space that detaches them from the habitual fixity of a wall hanging.

The environments that result from Sherman's constructions generate qualities that are at times playful, at times dreamy, hence the title for this retrospective. *Dream Mechanics* presents a constellation of singular creations that oscillate between the materiality of their incarnation and their intimations of the sublime. Ultimately, in Mary Sherman's work, the field in which painting is experienced extends well beyond the eye, awakening the tactile, auditory and kinesthetic senses of its viewers.

Tamar Tembeck

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