

Dianne Hagen

June 29 – September 7, 2007

The Nelson-Freeman Gallery is pleased to present the third solo exhibition of the Dutch artist Dianne Hagen, whose production — generally considered to defy taxonomy — evolves mainly around the notion of instincts or pheromons¹, i.e. the visceral, uncontrolled synesthesical reactions governed by the senses. The Nelson-Freeman Gallery has already shown, as early as 2004, some works of this kind by Dianne Hagen, namely those based on the Rorschach test. At the same time (2004), Dianne Hagen curated at the Amsterdam Stichting Outline a group exhibition entitled “Much Obligated, With Grace” whose next venue was the Bank Villa in 2005. The paradoxical title of this exhibition betrays the artist’s distinctive taste for disconcerting and surprising the viewers, since it confronts them with an unexpected situation or object — i.e. the very work of art itself — which leads them to wonder and question themselves about what they generally take for granted. Dianne Hagen has just returned from a several months sojourn in India where she carried out the project of a residence for artists.

Dianne Hagen’s current exhibition features a new series of drawings initiated in 2004. These works center on the drawing bidimensionality, which she enhances by adjunctive extra material spread on the paper surface, such as plastic, mineral modeling paste, glass debris, collages and so forth. One of these drawings is composed of lilies, displayed in circles and forming a frame or frieze around pieces of transparent broken glass imbedded within mineral modeling paste. At first sight the drawing offers an almost idyllic vision, yet in no time the broken glass debris exert a contradictory, paradoxical effect, invalidating the first positive impression. While reflecting light, they remain “aggressive” (i.e. cutting, slitting) — a recurrent antithetic hybridization in Dianne’s work. This ambivalence, characteristic of her works, continually refers to analogies in our immediate, familiar world and surreptitiously call to mind other associations. Another drawing is composed of aluminum foils forming the frame of the drawing. Against the background of the metallic foils appear letters cut out in magazines and pasted the way they would in an anonymous message. The words formed by the letters are “freedom yeah right”, a motto that appears in several works and refers both to the drawn subject — an organic or mineral form freely displayed although alien to any known specific context — and “the ode to the freedom of expression”, which plays an essential part in the artist’s condition. Dianne Hagen tries to establish a direct association between the object shown and the mental image it conveys. Two reading levels are thus offered: the *anima* one that connects us with the world of ideas, of the invisible and insubstantial, while the *animus* level, connects us through the senses to the physical, objective world of the body, which is actually the work of art itself. The life long reflection of the artist is embodied in the work of art, a trace that will survive that very artistic life. Diverted from their customary use, the appealing colors and themes soon engender in the spectator’s mind a surreptitious questioning that was unpredictable at first sight. The notion of beauty does not survive the collision. At times, in Dianne Hagen’s work, the very motives remind us

Subconsciously of an organic world which has a life of its own. Classical elements such as illusionistic perspective may also play their parts, as is the case namely in a blue relief made of mineral modeling paste and glue, in the center of which lies, imbedded, a frost picture pasted on a glass pane.

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Dianne Hagen shows equally three sculptures placed on low tables. Two of them refer directly to classical sculptures, busts or nikkos, which in the past were often erected monuments. Yet, their minimal scale reduction deprives them of their former status symbol. The reduced dimensions link them somehow to daily life objects, or fetishes. The third table, as opposed to the former ones which played the parts of pedestals, is covered with some tapestry made up of textile cones; a transparent plastic sheet covers this tablecloth, the whole assuming the possible role of a daily life object. The “kitsch” elements, here introduced, are meant to desacralize art forms inherited from tradition.

Dianne’s artistic approach deals with the constant exploration of the relationship linking the work of art and its intellectual reception. Her works never bear any title — a process which, evading frontiers, confinements and taxonomy enables the artist to entertain an intimate, constant dialogue between her works and the viewers. Like in the Rorschach test, where titles are inexistent, the viewer makes each time the experience of a self-projection, which is at once unique and idiosyncratic.