

ARTFORUM

DIJON/VOSNE-ROMANÉE, FRANCE/PARIS

Wade Guyton

LE CONSORTIUM/ACADÉMIE CONTI/LE MUR

The first room of Le Consortium contained a color photograph printed on canvas and exhibited on the floor. The photo depicts both the tubular frame of a Marcel Breuer chair and a detail of a black painting visible in the background. Shot in Wade Guyton's studio in New York, it is the matrix for the twenty-three other works on display here; the same image is also the basis for *North Wall, Bowery Studio, WG3505*, 2016, exhibited at Le Mur in Paris. In each of these works, certain details are isolated, enlarged, and printed employing the artist's usual Epson UltraChrome ink-jet printer. In decontextualized details, the light reflections off the tubular-steel chair and the painting reveal prismatic colors, a crescendo of polychrome and washed-out effects. Installed in the museum's longer room were two horizontal paintings, each about ten feet wide, in which the image is reproduced on the left; the rest of the piece is a white surface stained by traces of ink from the print head, in an effect reminiscent of an abstract film.

The Académie Conti, occupying a cellar where jugs of wine were once stored, was the setting for seven dark-gray monochromes so large they grazed the wooden ceiling beams. It was evident that their chromatic effects were caused by the depletion of pigment in the printer, or by the way the ink settled into the canvas support, grainier and less absorbent than the paper for which the machine was made. This is Guyton's way of granting materiality to writing, which is now increasingly digital, that is, the result of a touch of the fingertip. And yet it is hard not to read these deliberate glitches as pictorial marks, similar to frescoes worn away by humidity or the milky forms in Yves Tanguy's alien landscapes. Behind these works, in other words, the artist lies in ambush, as was suggested by a rose-colored, faded self-portrait in a side room. While the work is difficult to date, its setting can be easily identified by the facade of the Académie Conti in the background, enveloped in a misty gothic atmosphere.

The artist's gesture was also present in the paintings exhibited at the Consortium, in an exhibition curated by Nicolas Trembley, which travels to the Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva this month. Apparently diptychs, the paintings reflect the limits created by the size of the printer: The artist folded the canvas and put it through the printing process twice. As a result, there is a gap between the two images, a sense of being out of sync—like looking at two frames of a film that has been lost.

Speaking at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York in 1987, Jean Baudrillard confessed that he found contemporary art to be iconoclastic: "In most of the images I have seen here in New York, there is nothing to see. They are literally images that leave no trace." He then went on to specify, "You cannot add the same to the same and the same, and so on to infinity: That would be poor simulation. You must rip the same from the same." Guyton, who moved to New York roughly a decade or so later, crossed out many images with X's, the most elementary gesture for exorcizing their power. However, these new works, in which the two halves do not come together, show that it would be too reductive to describe his work as iconoclastic. The attempt to reproduce the same gesture twice fails. Something goes awry in the communication between machines, one that writes and one that prints, and in the circulation of information between the surface of the screen and that of the canvas, between the digital file and the printed image, and between the keyboard commands and the printer roller. As the Cesca chair and the black painting photographed in his studio demonstrate—two earlier works that are now protagonists of a new series—what is taking place is not identical reproduction or repetition. Guyton's work is a far cry from what Baudrillard, in his typically apocalyptic, sarcastic tone, called the "Xerox degree of culture."

—Riccardo Venturi

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.



Wade Guyton,
Untitled, 2015, Epson
UltraChrome K3
ink-jet print on linen,
10' 8" × 9'.
Le Consortium.