

Review: Anna Plesset at Untitled

by Pac Pobric | 12 February 2013 | On-Verge



Anna Plesset. A Still Life (2013). Installation View. Image courtesy of Untitled.

The great interest many contemporary artists have in the history and approaches of conceptual art is one of the big stories driving recent work. Galleries (especially those on the Lower East Side) are full of clean, sleek-looking work that heavily relies on the color white as a clean slate on which to wax philosophical. (No judgment there, just an observation of approach.) Anna Plesset's work is very much of this tendency. The question is whether or not she distinguishes herself well enough from her contemporaries.

Her exhibition at Untitled relies on quirky juxtapositions of objects: in the front gallery, a floor plan of the artist's studio from a residency in France; a series of framed black-and-white photocopies from a book on an American Impressionist painter; and, on the floor, a stack of what look like newspapers. In the back space, a painted white canvas; two sculpted wood blocks made to look like stacks of books, featuring two actual books; a 19th-century photograph of a woman painting; a book about the history of American art on a glass table held by industrial-grade yellow supports; and a painting of a flower on drywall. There is also some ephemera on the table, some of which is possibly made of plaster.

The art, although clearly objects (such as painting, sculpture, and books) nevertheless stands explicitly against object-oriented art, just as conceptual art did before. We're meant to come into the gallery to put together the pieces of Plesset's intellectual puzzle with our minds, not our senses. But Plesset's work, like that of her forebears, isn't able to take into account that intellectual experience is unable to simply be divorced from the sense. We still *look* at conceptual art, or listen to it, or smell it. Making sense of art is still a process filtered through individual experience.

But there are deeper issues with the work, which stem essentially from a lack of focus. Plesset's heavy use of the color white is a simple means by which to unify her various media, but it masks the fact that there is no deeper cohesion to the exhibition. It's not that photocopies, painting, sculpture, and ephemera cannot be effectively used together, but simply that they aren't here. Her heavy reliance on a single color is an underdeveloped attempt to hide her eclecticism, which is basically an inability to hone in on and articulate a definite artistic problem. The work meanders.

It would be easy to confuse Plesset's work with that of contemporaries like Ceal Floyer or Cindy Hinant. Obviously, all three share an interest in conceptual art and the readymade. The question, however, is how to use the approach effectively. Both Floyer and Hinant have shown at least some ability to employ the tactic, and there's no saying that Plesset won't also do so herself. Untitled frequently puts on thoughtful shows, and if Plesset joins the stable, she may well get a helpful prod in the right direction. But this work isn't there yet.

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