

ISSUE 65

JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2013

Art Review:

Contains 7% ABRAHAM CRUZVILLEGAS; 4% MERİÇ ALGÜN RINGBORG;
35% PANTONE 5493; 7% ADEL ABDESSEMED; 2 FRENCH NOVELISTS



Sarah Lucas

"A LOT OF MANUFACTURED
OBJECTS ALERT MY LEWD
DETECTOR. LIKE MAKEUP
ON A PRETTY FACE"

Berlin

"THERE'S A COMMUNITY
THING HERE"
DOUGLAS GORDON



Curtis Mann (main gallery) /
Valerio Carrubba (project room)
Galleria Monica De Cardenas, Milan
26 September – 24 November

The ouroboros, the circular serpent biting its own tail, is such an ancient symbol that Jung indexed it as an archetype. Since snakes cyclically renew their skin, the *ouroboros* stands for eternal return, transformation, self-reflectivity – a perfect icon, I guess, for the infinite cycle of production, consumption and reproduction of digital images, endlessly feeding itself, to which we are currently overexposed. Curtis Mann aptly gave the titles *Ouroboros*, *Light* and *Ouroboros*, *Dark* to new large works created for this show (all 2012), which extends his enquiry into the structure of

photography. In 2010 the Chicago-based Mann participated in the Whitney Biennial with *After the Dust*, *Second View (Beirut)* (2009), a series of chemically altered prints based on images of conflict and strife randomly found on websites like Flickr, which he had partially erased and blurred, as if in a 2.0 version of Pictorialism. In Milan he moves even closer to painterly effects by manipulating a set of lensless pictures of his own making, in order to create abstract compositions on the edge between, as his show's title suggests, *Medium and Materiality*.

Mann bridges the gap between digital and material worlds by physically performing on his prints several actions carried out by photo-editing softwares: cut, paste, dissolve, glow, bulge, dent, twirl... so that the manipulation of each image becomes tangible. As if to reverse the speed of digital postproduction, his process is long and elaborate: he covers some areas of the original prints in transparent varnish, before exposing them to acids and bleaching. He then rips and fractures them in pixellike squares, which he finally recomposes in abstract grids where white fragments are interspersed among 'figurative' ones, sometimes torn and tossed, their backs exposed. In other works – *Openings*, *Concrete*; *You Are the Measure (Desktop)* – Mann presents to the viewers only the neutral verso of a print, but with tiny portions of paper flipped up, as if to suggest possible readings, while in the smaller series *Paper Fragments*, he assembles small bits of altered chromogenic prints into 'alien' and almost sculptural forms, collaged on some black-and-white laser prints, used as undisclosed backgrounds.

In the project room, the reflection upon found images, self-imposed 'anachronism' and analytic techniques takes another turn with Italian artist Valerio Carrubba's oil paintings. Adopting the classical format of half-length portraits set against a monochromatic background, these four works depict imaginary characters, clad in kimonos, wearing garish designer clothes or fully covered in tattoos, but with faces enigmatically concealed by masses of intricately combed hair. Typically for Carrubba, all the titles are palindromes: *Ian is not on Sinai* (all works 2012); *Olson is in Oslo*; *Kc is sick*, *Mr Alarm*. The paintings (after preexisting images) are binary also in terms of execution: since 2003, Carrubba has been painting each of his subjects twice. After having entirely finished a figure, he both erases and replicates it by painting an exact replica on top: a nonmechanical method of reproduction that defuses all the image's 'realism' to highlight instead the devious process of its formulation. The obsessive details, saturated colours and neat outlines of the portraits, as well as the repetitive perfection of each brushstroke, seduce the gaze and make it wander over every inch of the surface, only to remind us that there's no original below the copy we look at.

BARBARA CASAVECCHIA



Valerio Carrubba
Mr Alarm, 2012, oil on stainless
steel, 53 x 44 cm. Photo: Andrea
Rossetti. Courtesy Galleria
Monica De Cardenas, Milan