

CONRADI

Artforum
October 2009

Cordula Ditz

Cordula Ditz's recent exhibition included paintings, videos, collages, and site-specific sculpture. The first thing to strike the visitor's eye was the large-format paintings, all the same size (approximately eight by six feet) and hung on black walls. They look as if Ditz were „covering“ various positions within the canon of modernist abstraction while simultaneously transforming them. The casualness of her approach gives these works a power all their own, along with a sense of parodic commentary that alternates between the subliminal and the explicit. Five of these works are gestural abstractions, some of them augmented with text, while two others refer to a specific pictorial vocabulary: *Trust Me* (all works 2009), for example, continues in the tradition of Frank Stella's black paintings of 1958 – 60, with its logic of shape and structure. But where Stella filled his canvases with linear, identically sized bands parallel to their edges, Ditz ironically cracks open Stella's closed field, arranging pictorial elements diagonal to the frame, or sending them on collision courses and down blind alleys. *Mourning Piece (Song 2)* is a floor sculpture made of a seven-by-seven grid of mirrored tiles, a clear allusion to Carl Andre – with the difference that the viewers who step onto the work trample their own mirror images as well.

Works by Ditz tend to be decidedly confrontational. In her paintings, this effect is achieved via the large-scale formats and fluidly forceful gestures, and underscored by the addition of typically headlinelike sentences, are you going to kill me or are we just making small TALK is one such sentence that Ditz has incorporated as a five-line block of text amid a tangle of skillfully unfinished-looking gestures in paint; it's a line of dialogue taken from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The visitor may or may not get the reference, but even so, the work's pop-culture touch and ironically aggressive stance come through clearly. Quotes like this might be culled from trashy films or song lyrics (Ditz played bass for several girl-glam punk bands), but some are simply made up: Their status as references is less important here than their function as refrains – the subjective sound of sentences that have remained behind in someone's head. Ditz paints with quick-drying acrylic and spray paint on unprimed coarse cotton cloth, thus explicitly practicing a form of what she calls „painting without a second chance.“

The artist juxtaposes her aggressive paintings with equally powerful video installations, all of them using sampled film material and a junk aesthetic. Particularly imposing is her *Final Girls*. Its source is a scene in *Friday the 13th Part III* (1982), in which the surviving heroine is forced into a corner and begins to fight back against the evil force. Ditz edited the material into two loops - lasting only two and four seconds, respectively – which are projected on screens as tall as the room itself and positioned opposite each other. Both focus on the horrified face of the protagonist and on some indefinite striking motions, no doubt a weapon being swung (though one might also think of gestural painting here). There is no resolution, just the moment itself extended in time. The viewer who stands between these ecstatically violent images becomes the imaginary focal point of this scene, entering into the fictional constellation of aggressor and victim. The one to whom these images are addressed is no longer merely an impartial bystander. *Jens Asthoff*

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.

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