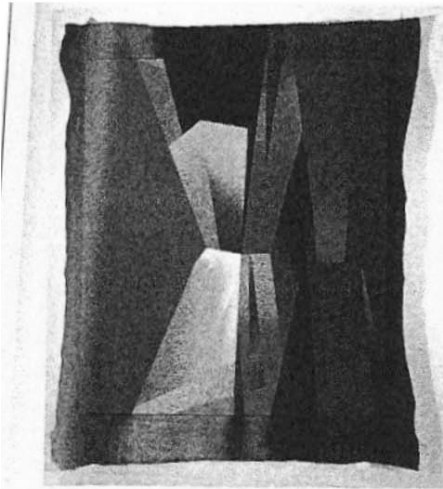


SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Art Forum
February 2005



Kim Fisher, *Padparadscha 40*, 2004,
oil on linen, 90 x 71".

KIM FISHER

JOHN CONNELLY PRESENTS

Writing in 1967, at the height of Minimalism, Clement Greenberg worried that the aesthetic field had devolved into a diffuse and unmotivated panorama of "non-art" and design, a pernicious development that the then-embattled critic understood as an unmitigated and unilateral abjuration of tradition. Commensurate with a descent of advanced art into the popular, Minimalism for Greenberg precipitated a situation in which *anything* could become readable as art, if not necessarily (or likely) *good* art. The name he gave this phenomenon was "novelty," an ironic if elegiac reference to style, ephemeral trends, and the fickleness of taste set against the pure presence of the bounded artwork.

For Kim Fisher, such a prehistory is at once assumed and transvalued; novelty here becomes a given, while Minimalism is less a passing fancy than a vernacular mode. In her first solo show in New York, the artist best known for sublime red paintings corrupted by the logo of fashion designer André Courrèges installed a spare suite of four paintings of gemstones: *Beryl*, 21; *Corundum 19* (*Sapphire Gray Scale*); *Padparadscha 40*; and *Carbon 17* (*Bort Dia-*

mond) (all works 2004). Mining a deep modernist past in which formalism and abstraction—alongside attendant defections from the quotidian, the beautiful, and most of all the feminine—loom large, Fisher nods to the likes of Josef Albers and Ad Reinhardt in her reduced planar schemes and monochromatic palettes. And it is hard not to think of Robert Ryman when looking at Fisher's supple brown-linen supports, stretched on the bias, pinched and cinched and freed to extrude beyond the frames, as so much supplementary (though never superfluous) fabric.

But oddly and equally, the painted fields and their frayed edges uphold such genealogies only to deviously unravel them. The specter of the decorative—that always-feared marker of the capricious—is here conjured and equivocally suspended without the artist's relation to it ever being made quite clear. Oversized and just shy of garish, her abstractions, derived from the stones' refraction of light, disperse their referents across rigorously immaculate surfaces, the better to insist upon their fraught appeal. *Beryl*, 21, with its layers of deep greens and velvety blacks, and *Padparadscha 40*, with its aggregation of fiery oranges and fervent reds, are unmistakably sites and ciphers of fantasy and its ambivalent effects.

These works are infused not with the body or its metonymic signifiers but rather with the very objects of our longing. Fisher is at play in a field of desire, one that might not be so far removed from Minimalism after all. Art historian Briony Fer has suggested that deadpan Minimalism was always decidedly more or less than rational. The most pristine surface or systematically logical series was always already complicated from within, tainted by a

phantasmatic dimension at once arbitrary and obsessive. Fer writes that "apparently restrained surfaces can harbour fantasies of both desire and destruction," and so it is for Fisher, too.

—Suzanne Hudson

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