

GAGOSIAN GALLERY

glass

Horror Vacui: the fear of empty spaces at Gagosian, Athens

Xenia Founta



*Untitled #320, 279, 840 combinations of a 2x2 grid, 23 colours, 2014
Creased archival pigment print, 101.6 x 152.4 cm by John Houck. Courtesy of Gagosian Gallery.*

On show at Gagosian Gallery, Athens is an exquisite exhibition comprised of multiple works by well-known established artists with the central theme of “horror vacui” or “fear of empty spaces” a term describing a strand of outsider art which attempts to fill the entire surface of an artwork’s space.

“Horror vacui”, or “kenophobia” in Greek, Op Art, is a visual abstraction using optical, hypnotic illusions; in which op art produces as a side effect of this embattled triage of hand, eye and mind, where mark-making is a means in which to fill space with optically rich results.

Employing the unencumbered and timeless context of op art William Anastasi, Urs Fischer, Damien Hirst, John Houck, Bruce Nauman, Richard Phillipd, Nancy Rubins, Despina Stokou, Piotr Uklanski, Rachel Whiteread, Richard Wright and the late Roman Opalka suggest an infinitesimally extreme way of viewing art.

The Swiss artist Urs Fischer, who has exhibited widely worldwide, imitates the appearance of raw sheetrock with playful wallpaper, an odd moment of past-life mimesis for the walls in a room that now communicates the sensation of an indeterminate space. The Seattle-born artist Joel Morrison experiments with a myriad of genres and processes; this time his shiny stainless steel corner piece converts the often uselessness of the space into a glaringly prominent strength. And the entire space itself, no matter how forgotten or invisible, is used as a sculptural material by British sculptor Rachel Whiteread.

A totality of marks is evident in the dense graphite drawings of the American artist Nancy Rubins so as to appear burnished like dull dark metal, while work by the American painter and visual artist William Anastasi made by scribbling onto the paper contained inside of his pocket with a pencil cramped in his hand which act as a diaristic account of this space within the everyday as an active site of mark-making. Also included in the show is the late Roman Opalka, the widely known French-born Polish painter, spent a lifetime documenting time and space with his Cartes de Voyage works on paper by painstakingly counting towards infinity.

Offering a multi-media spectacle “Horror vacui” is a multidimensional show of vibration, movement and various hidden meanings.