

M+B

ArtReview

October 2016

Daniel Gordon *Hand, Select & Invert Layer*

BolteLang, Zürich 27 August – 8 October

The American artist Daniel Gordon, born in 1980, is a little too old to be a digital native; nevertheless, his photographic practice has expanded as the potential of online image sourcing has grown. Now that a Google image search has become an easy reflex, Gordon's exhibition at BolteLang has an old-fashioned subject, dominated as it is by four large photographic still lifes, as well as two wallpaper installations and nine smaller framed *Screen Selections* (all works 2016), all generated by processes of digital research, sampling and collage.

The largest work, *Still Life with Fruit and Ficus*, is 151cm tall and 188cm wide, while the other three are in portrait format, all 126cm tall and 101cm wide. Each is the sole document of a set pieced together only for the camera's eye, in which block colours and graphic scribbles brightly frame traditional still-life subjects the artist found online – emblematic ancient clay vessels and symbolically laden perishable fruit, fish and plants. In the background of the aforementioned work, for example, a jagged pattern frames the upper section of the picture, and similar patterns are printed onto paper wrapped around blocks on which sit various jugs, amphora, two pots holding bouquets, gourds

and fruit. The still lifes offer a lexicon of image presentation and reproduction: some of the objects are propped, cutout flat images; other flat printed things are overshadowed by duplicate prints just behind, destabilising the edges of the object; while some forms – pears or rotting bananas, say – are reconstructed in three dimensions from taped-together prints of pears and bananas. Some shadows fall naturally, confirming the real depth in the staging; others are reworked and reprinted silhouettes – appearing, for example, in *Still Life with Oranges, Vessels, and House Plant*, as if the shadow were burning through the back of the tableau. The 20 × 25 cm camera print clarifies the imperfections of other graphic manipulation at previous stages of the image's construction, such as a pixelated Photoshop selection or the lined grain produced by a defective printhead reproduced on paper props.

Two gallery walls are covered by repeat-pattern wallpaper, *Zig-Zag in Black* and *Zig-Zag in Blue* respectively. The blocky broken lines, like a cartoon of disrupted transmission, generate movement behind the superficially calm portrait still lifes. Similar jagged forms are found in *Screen Selection 11*, in which added

striations of layers picked up by the computer colour selection make the print – while in entirely different media – even more reminiscent of poor television reception. All the *Screen Selections*, 50 by 40 cm in size, are composed of elements digitally culled during Gordon's process of photograph construction and are equally nostalgic, albeit tuning in to the early to mid-twentieth century, with cheery, blunt rhythmic shapes being printed onto canvas, then crisply mounted on aluminium.

Gordon's still lifes dominate the show, thanks to their detail and the labour evidently involved in their creation. He does not force comparisons to the umpteen precursors in the genre; he is also clearly indebted to Warhol's generation and artists such as John Baldessari and John Stezaker who are incisive with scissors and selection. Yet in his construction, dissection and reconstruction of subjects, and the creation of enclosed, fractured and immersive scenes, he makes one think also of the anatomy illustrators of the Renaissance who combined science and memento mori when they flayed and revealed their human subjects. Just as they did, Gordon is peeling back an anatomy that is both familiar and strange. *Aoife Rosenmeyer*



Still Life with Fish and Oysters, 2016, pigment print on luster paper, 126 × 101 cm.
Photo: Thomas Strub. Courtesy the artist and BolteLang, Zürich