

CLOSE, CLOSER, FADING

Giorgos Kontis, Hiu Tung Lau, YanWen Xiong

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Text by Jonathan Miles

What if culture was a diagram of everything that is out of focus? What if everything that is close, is also subject to fading rather than focus? What is a diagram anyway: a congruence of lines, an insistence of inscriptions and writing to create a passage from one level to the next? So what is it that passes before, in order to move through, delineating from one level to the next, in a display of potentiality?

Rather than a diagram that functions as a plan or model, we might entertain schema as a central reference for this exhibition because of its relationship of variable characteristics and fragile degree of temporal flux. Is the function of schemas to take something without focus (images), in order that focus (concepts) might occur? Was modernist abstraction but a series of encounters with the possibilities that arose out of the functioning of schema and if so are such encounters still able to function within the reconfigured play of the virtual and the actual?

Giorgos Kontis explores the tension between passivity and the outward gaze of the material construction of surface that gives rise to feelings related to not knowing the differences that are registered in the encounter of the work. In the most subdued assemblages there is the sense that something lurks beneath: a repressed image or a barely disguised underside indicting an elsewhere. Nothing is quite as it seems in this play of forces and yet the condition of the work appears to retreat into a state of withdrawal that renders mute this brooding passage to elsewhere. Is it that the work is really all in place and is such just there before our eyes and yielding to such eyes with small pleasures that might accrue?

YanWen Xiong paints vases, single vases floating in space, but then we might not be persuaded that they have a substantial place in the world. Instead they hover in a space of the in-between: but in-between what? Without any way of really knowing, they are between non-being and being (a third state). So as much as referring to something worldly (object-like), they are closer to a passage of register that records the passage of one state to another state. On the level of pictorial embodiment, they are closer to a presentation of transition or a flicker of becoming. Attention shifts from an object of the world, into a process of mental ideation through which an image is itself possible. Here we start to entertain several possibilities which all call upon the powers of abstraction in which the image is fading back into the very sea of emptiness out of which appearance started to make manifest.

Hiu Tung Lau produces work that never settles on fixed forms but undoes the tendency for them to become fixed. Her work rests on the ledge where this tension is at its greatest. Such a delicate sense of balance, part pictorial but part within the passage the mind records through its journey of making. An abstraction that plays with off-centred-ness and harmony, the 'just so of that', even its sufficiency. There is in this much by way of push and pull but not really that of figure and ground, rather of registrations such as sensuality and restraint. Whatever, we are drawn in close, placed on a tip of something, a feeling, a sense of transience, a slipping away of powers pertaining to certainty.