

# bernard jacobson gallery

## Reflections

3<sup>rd</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Reflections sees the grouping of recent work by Larry Bell, Joe Goode, William Tillyer and Marc Vaux. All four were born in the 1930s - Bell and Goode prominent figures in the Los Angeles scene since passing through the Chouinard Art Institute in the early 1960s, Vaux and Tillyer having settled in London and Yorkshire respectively, after studying at the Slade, also in the early '60s. Despite the geographical remove, the four artists have maintained strong personal and professional correspondences, continuing to take an active interest in each other's outputs and frequently identifying key areas of shared interest. The current show attempts to highlight some of these, and in so doing offer fresh insight into the careers of each.

The theme of reflections is most immediately apparent in the work of Larry Bell, whose cubes on display represent the outcome of nearly forty years of experimentation and refinement of the cube motif and the vacuum coating technique by which metal oxides are applied to the glass surfaces. This high finish renders the works with the ability to reflect and transmit light in uncanny and unforeseen ways, as the viewer moves around them - one moment appearing as cloudy luminescent cubes; the next opening up into translucent windows; and the next revealing a seemingly infinite hall of mirrors. All this imbues the works most simple of forms with a compelling and mysterious beauty.

Marc Vaux's career is also rooted in the creation of objects which are 'iconographically simple but perceptually complex', 'visually calm', yet 'conceptually reverbative', a confluence of practice which has led to the development of a mutual respect between Bell and Vaux across many years. Vaux's recent drawings, shown here, illuminate the preparatory admixture of intuition and order by which he explores new compositions to create a 'meditative type of object where the experience of colour can become more real than the painted surface'. In achieving these ends Vaux's works, (like Bell's), expand their site of meaning to include the viewers' own perceptual responses to their presence, and thus become, in a manner, reflective objects through which the viewer is forced to question his own act of viewing.

Since 2004, Joe Goode has been working in series which revisit and reflect upon the abiding themes of his career. The small acrylics in this show re-examine the milk bottle motif with

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which Goode established his reputation in the early '60s. Vibrant and richly coloured, these works place photorealist representations of highly reflective milk bottles against seemingly unconnected washes and non-representational splashes of bright metallic pinks, blues and golds (these recalling Bell's use of metal oxides to coat his surfaces). Through this juxtaposition of differing modes, Goode manages to at once assert and undermine his works' status as abstract/expressive or realist/mimetic pieces - rather presenting abstracted reconstructions of visual reality which cause the viewer to reflect upon the nature of the picture plane as a surface for visual illusion and personal expression.

William Tillyer's recent watercolours, (or drawings as he calls them), see the artist returning to an enduring theme of his oeuvre - the English landscape. Slowly built up layers of flowing pigment nestle against each other, creating a rich luminosity which links them to the work of all three other artists in the show. With these ephemeral marks Tillyer succeeds in offsetting impressions of space and light against imposed structural systems, such as a lattice or sequence of calligraphic marks. Thus, in a manner not dissimilar from Goode, he creates works which lure the viewer in with their rich complex of allusions, whilst continuing to assert their status as the self-declaring products of artifice. This juxtaposition of nature and artifice; classical and romantic; the allusive and starkly constructed permeates Tillyer's oeuvre, reflecting a firmly held belief in the interconnectedness of all things and causing the viewer to reflect on the validity and relevance of such binary assumptions.

Reflections provides an opportunity to see four major artists still at the peak of their creative powers, continuing to work through the implications of nearly half a century of committed and challenging artistic practice. It will also offer an opportunity to consider confluences in the works of these artists and thus draw attention to some significant art historical narratives which are all too often neglected.