

The New Order of Mike Zahn

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September 2017

www.kulturebite.wordpress.com

Adapter_Adapted &etc.

Mike Zahn

Greenspon Gallery

October 2017

Mike Zahn's recent exhibition, titled *Adapter_Adapted &etc.* at Greenspon Gallery, includes seven new works which reopen many propositions once popular in mainstream theoretical discourse. But this time, with a new technological worldview upon us, it will be different. If an occult non-site has opened up beyond the sterile aesthetic discourse of appropriation, then Mike Zahn inhabits it as the sole occupant.



Mike Zahn
Adapter_Adapted & etc., 2017
Installation view
Greenspon Gallery, New York

As it turns out, that which appropriation discovered was never satisfactory. Criticality aside, it became a standard practice now totally accepted within the economic systems of art world exchange. It is therefore quite astonishing to walk into Greenspon and find what seem to be two perfectly identical Peter Halley paintings, titled *Adapter_Adapted*, adjacent to two perfectly identical paint-by-number pictures of kittens, titled *Oh It's The Last Time / Oh It's The Last Time*. One should know that for ten years Zahn was Halley's studio manager. He has the complete material understanding and technical facility at hand to produce such paintings. The kitten paintings, which hang on a flanking wall and mirror the formal pairing of the larger diptych, borrow a lyric from a New Order single, and

show the subtle difference proposed by the song itself.



Oh It's The Last Time / Oh It's The Last Time, 2017
Acrylic on board with maple framing in two parts
18 x 40 inches

Like Elaine Sturtevant's *Sturtevant* appearance at White Columns, Sherrie Levine's *Broad Stripes* paintings at Jay Gorney, or Mike Bidlo's *Picasso's Women* installation at Leo Castelli, Zahn's show is in the same rarefied league. The entire exhibition is a discovery field. From the big pink painting named after Walter Benjamin's text *The Doctrine of The Similar*, to the monumental array of monochromes, with colors derived from mobile device finishes and which nods to Benjamin's earlier text *The Faculty of Mimesis*, to the doubling, tripling, and even quadrupling of the letter 'A' found throughout the gallery, *Adapter_Adapted & etc.* is a subtly complex

presentation of references referencing themselves well into infinity. I found the uppercase 'A' twice in the title of this exhibition, repeated in the title of one of its key paintings, once and once again on a non-functioning neon light and adhesive vinyl wall work entitled *BAGS*, again and again still within the structure of a provisionally made workman's wooden stepladder, and yes, even again in a small white painting leaning against the wall and resting on a washcloth on the floor. Zahn enacts a relentless strategy of duplication throughout, and it is a superb example of aesthetic mimetic behavior.



115 likes

walterrobinsonstudio #MichaelZahn "The Doctrine of the Similar" 2017 acrylic on canvas 90 x 90 in. and an untitled stepladder

1 DAY AGO

The Doctrine of The Similar, 2017

Acrylic on canvas
90 x 90 inches
Instagram post
walterrobinsonstudio

As this ritual play opens up the possibility of arcane readings, Zahn has energized the tattered, twisted pathos those early appropriation artist chose to ignore, or were just too cool for school to acknowledge. Like every appearance of the occult, Zahn's work functions as a contemporary simulacrum for the realm of the ecstatic. This seems to imply a *Necronomicon* paradox, but bear in mind it's not escapism if there's no escape. Fantastic.