

LEILA HELLER GALLERY.

GRISAILLE

SEPTEMBER 7th to OCTOBER 15th 2017



Liane Lang *Graphic Tales* (2017)

Graphite and chalk on digital pigment print. Unique work.

'Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing,
there is a field. I'll meet you there'
Rumi

NEW YORK, NY—FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE—Leila Heller Gallery is pleased to present *Grisaille*, through October 15th, 2017. Taking a monochromatic grey palette as its organizing principle and aesthetic theoretical vehicle, this exhibition reveals the emergence of that which subtracts or divides—a polemics of black and white or the search for a middle ground, a shade of grey—in the work of artists from around the globe: including Shiva Ahmadi, Yasima Alaoui, Ayad Alkadhi, Afruz Amighi, Reza Aramesh, Shoja Azari & Shahram Karimi, Bruce High Quality Foundation, Dilip Chobisa, Seth Cameron, Arthur Carter, Noor Ali Chagani, Nick Farhi, Nir Hod, Rachael Lee Hovanian, Joseph Kosuth, Liane Lang, Farideh Lashai, Shirin Neshat, Enoc Perez, and Dan Witz,

Grisaille: originally derived from a 19th century term for monochrome painting, especially the portrayal of three dimensional objects in two dimensional form, of which the work of British based Liane Lang in this exhibition approaches the closest contemporary example of this art historical origin, the *gris* or *grisaille* is updated in this exhibition to reflect the embattled gesture of not simply the monochromatic, but also any opposition to color as such, in at once its aesthetic and political modes. In Lang's *Graphic Tales* (2017), continuing her relentless use of photography to mine ideology of institutional spaces, features a rare medieval relief at Eton College, in which the artist has intervened with the use of charcoal and chalk on a digital pigment print, reflective of a "desire to make a mark on history in many acts...[against the] grand political histories" which the site entails. Shirin Neshat

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likewise uses monochrome photographic materials as the base of her work presented here. In her work from the series *Book of Kings* (2012), named after the 10th century book *Shahnameh* by the Persian poet Ferdowsi, Neshat uses high contrast portraiture to explore the consequences of the Arab Spring uprisings.

Meanwhile in two works from Amighi's recent work from *No More Disguise, the Headdress for an Empress* (2017) and *Headdress for the Beheaded* (2017), the relief leaves the page. Composed in light, steel, and shadow, like Lang's work, Amighi's makes reference to medieval structures—however in this case, it is the structure of a processional, examining the performance of power today and in yesteryear, intoning, "the emperor is the one we love in dangerous times." In Shoja Azari and Shahram Karimi's *Mist* (2011), a luminous video work projected onto acrylic on canvas, the *grisaille* is no longer a figure trapped between stone and a flat surface, but nonetheless, remains remains, like the work of Neshat, immured. Filmed in Iceland, the haunting atmospheric redolence slowly reveals in the middle ground the emergence of ghostly figures, ever entirely corpulent, whose existence seems as provisional and impossible as the hauntology they inhabit.

Yet, the figural dissolves behind the post minimalist demand to also examine grey as not only a color but an impossible idea. Taking from Joseph Albers search for a perfect neutral grey—a degree zero of color—artist Seth Cameron revisits the structuralist grid in a color study that reveals even divisions and oppositions themselves can be shades of grey, if indeed 'grey' as such can be defined as such. Neutrality is always impossible. For Enoc Perez, neutrality is not even an attempt. In one of a series of works dedicated to the current political moment, entitled *Kremlin/White House* (2017), oil on paper, the artist attempts in a mad desire to erase an image of the Kremlin and White House composed together, with the note 'pile of cocaine' scrawled in the bottom right hand corner. Israeli American artist Nir Hod also utilizes the trope of drugs and cocaine to reflect on a sense of division in the darkly romantic *The Night You Left* (2015).

At last, Joseph Kosuth's work on paper from 1996 in reference to René Magritte's *Treachery of Images*, positioned next to a Bruce High Quality University chalkboard, reminds the viewer that the political is always a place of appropriation. And always one which must be relinquished.

Between the black and the white, the left or the right, the grey emerges as terrain, a field of non-color, itself marked by color's emergence or withdrawal. This space is often, though not always political: a draining away or a surging forward. It is also in some way, for each artist, this terrain of the gray represents either the space of negative chroma, opposition, lack of life—or a desired place of meeting, 'out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right doing' (as Rumi states above), a shade of grey from which the very possibility of color might emerge.

PRESS INQUIRIES

For more information, images, and artist biographies, please contact press@leilahellergallery.com