

CRITICAL CELEBRATION

Cerith Wyn Evans, Simon Martin, Stephen Prina, Josephine Pryde, Kelley Walker

Curated by David Bussel

4 June - 9 July 2005

Critical Celebration is an international group exhibition featuring Cerith Wyn Evans, Simon Martin, Stephen Prina, Josephine Pryde and Kelley Walker, that endeavours to marshal a polyvalent notion of critique employing a variety of procedures, in a variety of contexts from the museum, to aesthetic politics to advertising and back again. In recent years the word critique has become over-determined, de-valued and at times forgotten such that the exhibition Critical Celebration seeks to reinforce its continued persistence and necessity in artistic practice and discourse despite the persistence and necessity of recent curatorial and market-led trends, for example the return of 'formalist' practice. The show was conceived not as a rebuttal to these trends but as a point of insistence for the unfinished, discursive project that is critique itself, here suggesting a sustained ideological inquiry into the production and consumption of art and culture at large, and its manifold economies. Although the exhibition asks "Where do we go from here?," it cannot answer its own question, it can only act upon it.

The purposely-misleading title Critical Celebration comes out of an essay by the American art historian George Baker printed in a catalogue from a show at the Hamburg Kunstverein entitled Contextualize in 2003. In it Baker looks at critique and celebration the former linked politically to the left and the latter to the right in relation to artists from the past fifteen years engaged in the return of Institutional Critique and site-specificity and compares them to artists engaged in Relational Aesthetics or Postproduction positions. The exhibition seeks to fold in this information by setting up a dialogue between the works to promote a nexus of practices and positions that employ image and textual appropriation from debased, second or third degree sources in an effort to interrogate the contested borders of the culture industry. The exhibition is not a celebration, it is a question.



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