Stefan Eins, From and to Another Dimension, 2008, digital print, plated steel frame, 33 x 55"

The Physics of Liquid Formation

Stefan Eins at CREON Gallery in New York

by John Mendelsohn

One of the perpetual philosophies of the avant garde is the conscious cultivation of unfettered awareness in ordinary life. Attempts to realize this are now canonical: Baudelaire's flâneur, Jarry's 'pataphsyics, Surrealist automatism, Duchamp's readymades, Situationist psychogeography, Cage's chance procedures and Rauschenberg's place between art and life. Feeding this stream is the practice of Zen meditation and its sense of "nothing special" in the nature of ordinary existence, where the miraculous need not be pursued but is continually present.

The cultivation of awareness is at the heart of Stefan Eins's art, recently shown at CREON Gallery in New York. Eins finds or creates situations where he recognizes significance in serendipity. He discovers stains on pavement that become, through his noticing, meaningful images. By his own pouring or spraying paint, lively silhouettes emerge, like shadow puppets. Exemplary of this approach is Eins's photographic *Portrait [Self]*, which recreates his finding an abstract version of his profile in the shadow of a cornice that moves across the facade of a Manhattan apartment building.

Like Leonardo da Vinci, who noted the magical tendency of stains to become images before our eyes, Eins is taken with the working of the mind to perceive signs and wonders in ordinary life. The urgency to identify these as self-manifesting pictures recalls the periodic appearance of naturally occurring "miraculous images" of Jesus and Mary that are reported in the media and become objects of veneration.

Eins put his discoveries in terms of documenting evidence "from another physics reality," proposing an extra-rational dimension that generates these images. This 'pataphysical approach, reaching beyond the scientific and the metaphysical to the poetic, where raw material and the city speak directly to the artist who, like an attentive antenna, receives their messages. A lovely example of this by Eins is *From and to Another Dimension*, a large photograph of a scarred wall with a crack at whose end is a blotch of red that reads as a blooming rose.

Three larger works with brown paint on found wood, usually pieced from irregular shapes, together form an emotional chord of risk, threat, and aggression. In *Into the Abyss/Not*, a silhouette of a rough beast slouches toward the edge of cliff. In *Conditioned by an Alien, Personified, Abuse and Evil Force,* a devil looms over a panicked, cartoony creature. In *Monkey Rides a Donkey*, we are witnesses to the attack.

These three pieces have the sense of the artist's conjuring up what is in the air; the feeling of a country in crisis, through the medium of the spill. The subtext of these works is the undercurrent of political critique that periodically appears in Eins's work, made explicit in linking the title of a collage, *The Criminal Core in the Republican Party*, to an image from Abu Ghraib. The confluence of art and social awareness is continuing concern for Eins, the founder of Fashion Moda, the seminal alternative art space that began in Soho in the 1970s and moved to the South Bronx, where the downtown scene and the world of hip hop and graffiti cross-pollinated.

Eins also suggests a continuum between artistic and biological creation in his notion of "the physics of liquid formation," seen in a number of works in the exhibition. In *Organisms*, blue spray paint applied at close range yields what appear to be a variety of species of primeval creatures with vertebrae swimming on thick shards of glass. A similar evocation of natural processes is seen in works like *Growth*, with its capillary-like fingers of pigment holding a wash of mint green. In *Sun and Ocean,* a sprayed circle of red hangs over a cracked expanse of blue paint. On a more personal level are a number of drawings, like *Rat*, which allows a raw animal to emerge from the pink scrabble of gestural scrapings, through white paint to the red paper below.