

Artillery

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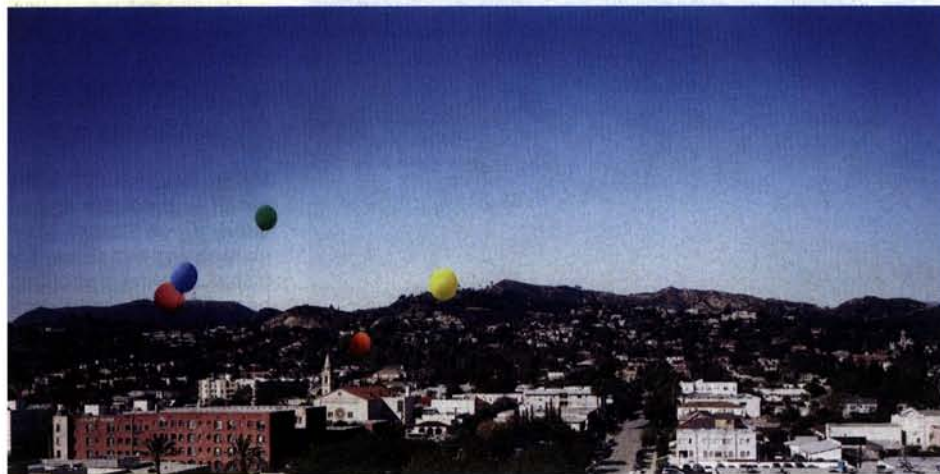
FLORIAN MAIER-AICHEN HAS EXPLORED the confluence of the digital and the analogue before in his large-scale images, but his new works from 2011 challenge our notions of the real. Maier-Aichen often begins with film shot with a large-format camera, his images being later digitally manipulated. The most obvious example is *La Brea Avenue in the Snow*, which depicts a series of snow-covered houses like those that appear in Bernd and Hilla Becher's photographs. Maier-Aichen shot the image in the Los Feliz neighborhood of Los Angeles on a grey day, added period cars from the 70's, 80's and 90's, and then drew the snow digitally, transforming the city into the realm of fantasy.

In Maier-Aichen's landscapes there is often a double-take as the viewer asks whether or not something could or does exist. *Aus Ven* [From Hven] depicts the Swedish island Hven shot from the air. The rich yellows and greens of the landscape are exaggerated, turning them into an abstraction like a Mondrian painting. A similar observation can be made from *Untitled* of a cruise ship surrounded by mountains photographed from a commonly visited postcard spot overlooking Norway's Geiranger Fjord. Here Maier-Aichen offsets the red and green hues, recreating the disorienting appearance of a 3-D image, but one that can be seen without corrective glasses. A similar interplay between two and three dimensions occurs with *Osterjon I* and *Osterjon II*. These images did not even start as photographs, but digital illustrations; they document what appear to be Kenneth Noland paintings hung on the walls of a flooded gallery. While clearly referring to color field painting these Noland-like bodies also stand in for the landscape — their triangular peaks of striped colors emerge like mountains from the dark water below.

The carefully installed exhibition also plays with dichotomies as many of the pieces are paired both in form and content. *Ennis House* is a long horizontal photograph of the distant Hollywood Hills where the tiny Frank Lloyd Wright structure might be seen on the right if our attention weren't drawn away by large red, green, yellow, blue and orange balloons floating in the foreground against the clear blue sky. This work is installed across from *Nacht im Riesengebirge* [Night in the Riesengebirge], a flattened image of the painterly landscape composition used by Caspar David Friedrich in 1835; Maier-Aichen's is neither clearly a painting or a photograph, but rather is dominated by a washy, dark blue night sky where other tiny balloons float toward the heavens.

Maier-Aichen juxtaposes the hand-drawn and the observed, allowing drawing, painting, photography and digital technologies to merge. Yet as crisp, large-scale photographic prints, the resulting images always appear to be representations of the world around us. Maier-Aichen's technical prowess is remarkable. His body of works suggests that with a bit of magic — in this instance, the use of Photoshop — the observable world, and reality, can become whatever anyone wants it to be.

—Jody Zellen



Florian Maier-Aichen, *Ennis House*, 2011