

Art Now LA
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Presenting Male Artists as Relics
Tammi Campbell
Boring Art
Anat Ebgi
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by Jody Zellen



I have always been drawn to art about art. I am continually intrigued by the question, “*Why do artists remake works by other artists?*” I have contemplated appropriationist strategies and the motivations of artists like Sherrie Levine, Richard Pettibon, Sturtevant, Deborah Kass and Yasumasu Morimura, as well as Rachel Lachowicz. Levine re-photographed iconic black and white photographs by Walker Evans, Rodchenko, Van Gogh, Man Ray and others. These works became her own through the act of re-photographing and re-presentation. Pettibon created small-scale reproductions of works by his contemporaries like Frank Stella, Roy Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol. Kass’ paintings use the form and format of iconic male artists, replacing the subject with women. Lachowicz has remade minimalist sculptures in materials such as eye shadow and red lipstick.

To my mind, an artist who remakes the work of another is at first paying homage, while simultaneously engaging in an act of transformation and reinterpretation. In her first Los Angeles exhibition, Canadian artist Tammi Campbell uses works by Ellsworth Kelly, Frank Stella, Josef Albers, Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari as a point of departure. Entitled *Boring Art*, in reference to Baldessari’s seminal conceptual 1971 artwork, *I Will Not Make Boring Art*, Campbell painstakingly recreates iconic pieces by these artists. While the paintings are faithful reproductions, she alters how they are presented and viewed, as many are surrounded in plastic or bubble wrap.

Rather than celebrate the work of these male artists, she presents them as relics, ready for, or recently removed from storage. The exhibition at first seems like a one-liner about appropriation, yet there is more going on than re-creation. The bubble wrap, plastic, cardboard and tape have been carefully crafted from acrylic paint in the *trompe l’oil* style and are not “*the real thing.*” Upon this realization, the works become as much about Campbell’s process and technique as they are about the simulacra.

As objects, Campbell's paintings are to-scale replicas of works that have specific references to colorfield painting/theory and conceptual/text-based art. She has chosen to remake a red and blue example from Ellsworth Kelly's curved monochrome series, three of Josef Alber's works entitled *Homage to the Square* and a large work from Frank Stella's protractor series: paintings derived from the semi-circular shapes of protractors, where each band is painted a bright color. *Damascus Gate, masked*, at first glance appears to be a faithful reproduction of Frank Stella's painting *Damascus Gate* (1969-1970). Rather than simply recreate the Stella painting, Campbell imagines it in process. Sections of the work are presented with pieces of masking tape still adhered to the raw canvas. Campbell, however, is not using actual tape but has painted a *trompe l'oeil* simulation.

In the 1960s, John Baldessari was interested in removing the artist's hand from his work. In his 1966-68 painting, *Quality Material*, he appropriated text from instructional guides and art history books and hired sign painters to do the lettering on his canvases. Campbell reverses Baldessari's process by recreating the work by hand. Her work would be seen as a painting rather than a conceptual artwork, except for the fact that she depicts the work with cardboard corners and plastic wrap, alluding to the idea that this work has been removed from display. Another work on view, a pastel on paper from 1976 by Ed Ruscha reads, *Another Hollywood Dream Bubble Popped*. Perhaps it is Campbell's intention to create illusions and literally pop bubbles. Rather than celebrate the work of these male artists, she presents them as relics – in faux bubble wrap – ready for or recently removed from storage as if to say, '*I can do what you do, but in my own unique way.*'

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