ALMINE RECH

Cliche
Organized with Bill Powers

Jun 20 — Jul 28, 2018 | New York, Upper East Side

Cliches are always already on the canvas, and if the painter is content to transform the cliche, to deform or mutilate it, to manipulate it in every possible way, this reaction is still too intellectual, too abstract: it allows the cliche to rise again from its ashes, it leaves the painter within the milieu of the cliche, or else gives him or her no other consolation than parody.

- Gilles Deleuze

The more probable the message, the less information it gives. Cliches, for example, are less illuminating than great poems.

- Norbert Weiner

We imagine love notes to be sweet.
We expect graduation speeches to be inspirational.
When a cliche subverts our expectations, these tropes become less familiar and acquire some measure of uniqueness.
In French, the term derives from a printing technique to make reproductions, giving the entire enterprise a perfume of Walter Benjamin.
Not quite onomatopoeia - they say the word cliche comes from the sound of the printing plate stamping down.
Click.
Click.
Cliche.
More important than its auditory beginnings, how should we define cliche today?
The betrayal of originality....
An overused motif....
Genericism as a byproduct of ubiquity....
I've heard the term or its stand-in breach conversations again and again.
Mark Grotjahn talks about the foolishness of painting skulls after Basquiat.
Cecily Brown confesses anxiety that *The Raft of the Medusa* might be too ridiculously famous to re-imagine in her own vernacular.
Sam McKinniss goes the other direction, proclaiming that cliche is a cornerstone of his artistic practice and something to be celebrated.
It's also a funny free association game to play.
If I say butterfly which artist is the first to come to mind?
How about cowboy?
A smiley face.
Bumper stickers.
Who owns the canoe?
And is it truly owned or leased to buy?
Joke paintings.
The issue—in part—might be traced back to problems of hierarchy.
Rewind to 17th century France, when the French Academy of Fine Arts compiled a list of pictorial categories by order of importance.
History paintings held top ranking.
Followed by portraitures.
Then landscapes.
And lastly genre paintings.
These organizing principles assigning value to subject matter naturally conceived sub-sets.
Even the very idea of a summer group show has become a form of cliche.
So what better time to harvest "Cezanne's Apple"—a snippet borrowed from Deleuze's thoughts on cliche—than June through July.
With this show, we hope to exploit the many facets of cliche: the self-portrait, the tribute painting, the nude, conceptual art.
Any rampant fetishization that may read as a shortcut to meaning or popularity is fair game.

- Bill Powers