

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Kelley Walker Deconstructs a Luxury Magazine," *Blouin Artinfo*, 9th March 2015



The installation of Kelley Walker's so-called brick paintings at Paula Cooper Gallery is simple enough: 12 silkscreen-and-collage works that resemble wall facades, each roughly the size of a window in the artist's New York studio, evenly spaced throughout the gallery. The bricks are white — the images made using 100 of them that Walker purchased on eBay, and then digitally scanned — and the imagery surrounding them comes from the unbound pages of *Domus*, an Italian luxury design and architecture magazine. Each painting is composed using a specific month's issue from 2012; July/August is a double summer edition, so those pages were culled to make two works.

But because this is Kelley Walker we're talking about, nothing is really simple. The artist is known for intently narrowing his focus on a very niche cultural corner, often one that involves production and printing processes, and then using this as a wedge to explore a much wider web of connections and relationships. I still remember the manic intensity with which he discussed a previous body of work that used a series of vintage Volkswagen advertisements as its source material. That intensity is itself contagious, even if it's not always easy to access Walker's semi-hermetic flowchart of how one thought leads to the next. (In the case of these current brick paintings, that involves the artist pondering the throughlines between latex paint used in disparate places — on the walls of MoMA versus the walls of public housing projects in the Bronx, for instance — and the connection to latex-based paint used in the silkscreening process.)

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So consider these works as the visual residue of Walker's feverish connect-the-dots between unlikely sources. One thing that is apparent after discussing them with the artist on a frigid March afternoon is the way in which they juggle notions of value, both in terms of art and architecture. "There's no logic between what makes one painting worth more than another — it's speculative hope," he said. Likewise, real estate, despite the apparent solidity of walls and foundations, "also went through a speculative bubble that burst." Walker has made brick paintings for years now, and he said that he's gradually allowed the works to reflect their own increasing value and popularity; now that they're sufficiently coveted by a well-heeled collector base, he's plastered their backdrops with the kind of glossy reading material suitable for that demographic. It's similar, he explained, to the way Haim Steinbach began using more expensive found objects as his readymade sculptures earned loftier price tags. And, without any apparent cynicism, he seems to find them reflective of a certain zeitgeist. "Is this the moment that defines 2015?" he wondered. "Are these paintings Warhol's Elvis-shaking-his-ass?"

Go see these works — they're on view through April 18 — and make up your own mind. Spend enough time ogling them (close enough to read the fine-print on the masthead pages) and maybe you'll start to feel some of the nuances that Kelley finds simmering beneath the surface. A non-exhaustive list would include: The "ghostliness" of white bricks; the picture plane's resemblance to a computer screen, with its endless windows and "layers of flatness"; the brick's correlation to the shape of money, and also to a unit of language; the CMYK printing process (used to screenprint the bricks, and also used by Domus to print its magazine), and how it has evolved over the decades, from the lurid saturation of the 1970s to today's "not too brash, not too bright, elegant" aesthetic; how these works "confuse the production logic of how they're made," oscillating between the digital and the handmade.

In any case, there's a clear and amusing transactional logic at work here, too. "I'm holding this real estate in place for a month," Walker said, referring to Paula Cooper's Chelsea space. The brick paintings will likely become evidence of a peculiar alchemy: Architecture informing art which, once sold, will be reinvested in real estate. "To be honest, I want to buy an apartment," the artist admitted. "These should actually pay for that."

<http://www.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1113000/bricks-latex-value-kelley-walker-deconstructs-a-luxury>