

LOS ANGELES

KIM FISHER

CHINA ART OBJECTS

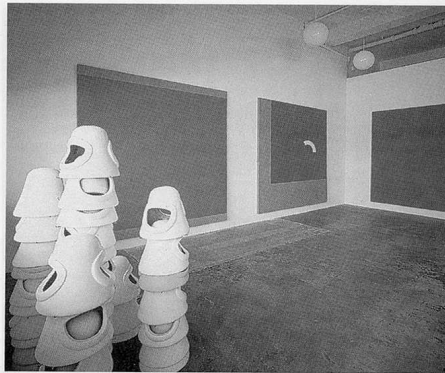
The allure of the monochromatic.

Well, yes, of course, it's like the wish to say something so completely that the entire continent of saying can be left forever. And these big red paintings, marked with a kind of insignia or logo (also in red, though one is partly white) pushed at times to the edge of the field or centering it grandly, all on sumptuous brown linen,

would appear to be an attempt at finitude, an attempt to bring together the specificity and thrill of the now (as embodied by fashion) and the lush severity and awe of Great Painting. To put it bluntly: Kim Fisher ponders whether the beautiful can be joined with the sublime, a big no-no for Kant and others.

The coordinates Fisher has set up for herself are Ad Reinhardt, Robert Ryman, Stephen Prina, and (even if almost every piece has the logo initials AC of André Courrèges) Prada. The caring attention to color, the subtlest gradations within and between works from, say, lipstick to cherry-tomato red, built up in an almost lacquerlike application of oil paint, points to Reinhardt; the luxe texture of the linen support, the insignias that wrap around the front of the canvas to the side, nod to Ryman; the abstraction of the logo's typeface recalls Prina; the sexy oomph of it all, along with the cachet of hue, engages Prada (the red tag of its sport line). Even if the paintings are not always entirely successful, Fisher's project—her consideration of certain art-historical models and her attempt to personalize the monochrome—is just much more prepossessing than so many other LA painters of her generation, who often produce things that look like illustrations from *Wallpaper*. Contemplating Fisher's work, you feel her struggle to do something that may take many years to accomplish, if it can ever be accomplished at all.

There is much to investigate in the system Fisher has established. For example, does she really need the Courrèges reference, which seems a bit more obscure than it has to be, as if it were some kind



Kim Fisher. Installation at China Art Objects, 1999.

of code? A pursuit of pure abstraction using a draftsman's tool like a French curve might have done more—forcing her to achieve the go-go electricity she's after by some other means, perhaps as her work's affect rather than its subject. The "A" and "C" work better in the smaller *Study for 1999*, where the logo is abstracted to the point of absolute form because it has been practically abandoned rather than broken up into parts, resembling not letters but specific yet unidentifiable patterns.

One wonders whether a greater play of scale might make Fisher question how to get the amazing matte effect of her large paintings into an equally intense but compact canvas. She also might think more about just what the relation is between her large paintings and her sculptural installation: six stacks of elegant, space-y helmets, all white except for two in canary yellow, based on a strange hat design by Pierre Cardin. Why is it that the fashion reference works better here than in the paintings, and yet the paintings remain much more engaging and complicated than the sculpture?

But I could stare at the edge between the red paint and the dreamy brown linen for days. And that edge, extreme and vulnerable, is almost an allegory for her enterprise: to find a way to keep something vital between matters that have the potential to deaden one another, i.e., fashion/art, paint/support, history/now, personality/anonymity. Fisher is in search of a place—an edge—from which to resist and exceed the status quo of how these supposed oppositions are understood.

—Bruce Hainley