

INPRINT



REVIEWS

NOVEMBER 2012

New York

Robert Pincus-Witten on
"Picasso and Françoise
Gilot: Paris-Vallauris
1943–1953"

David Rimanelli on Mark
Flood

Eva Díaz on Paul Pfeiffer

Jeffrey Kastner on Sarah
Oppenheimer

Lauren O'Neill-Butler on
James Lee Byars

Brian Sholis on James
Welling

Colby Chamberlain on
Wooster Enterprises

Michael Wilson on Michael
Bell-Smith

Donald Kuspit on Dennis
Adams

Lloyd Wise on Ellen
Gronemeyer

Emily Hall on Jessica Rath

Barry Schwabsky on
Simryn Gill

Boston

Gregory Williams on
Derrick Adams

New Orleans

Nick Stillman on Aaron
McNamee

Little Wolf, WI

Solveig Nelson on
Gretchen Bender

Aspen, CO

Catherine Taft on Amelie
von Wulffen

Los Angeles

Travis Diehl on Jay Chung
& Q Takeki Maeda

Suzanne Hudson on
Mickalene Thomas

Ben Carlson on Patrick
Staff

London

John-Paul Stonard on Sara
Barker

Milton Keynes, UK

Sherman Sam on Hariton
Pushwagner

Glasgow

Lauren Dyer Amazeen on
Sarnath Banerjee

Berlin Reviews

Vadim Fiškin

GALERIJA GREGOR PODNAR



Vadim Fiškin, *Don Quixote Pact*, 2010–12, wind turbine generator, electric fans, fiberglass, 7' 5/8" x 13' 1 1/2" x 7' 6 1/2".

Vadim Fiškin makes art. "Well," you might ask, "so what else is new?" As empty as the statement may sound, it really encapsulates Fiškin's practice: His objects and installations look as simple and blunt as that sentence, and they are similarly mystifying. The works featured in his recent show "Light Matters 2" are little ontological riddles, impossibilities, feats of logic-defying causality, at once images and reflections on imagemaking and its conditions. The installation *miss Christmas*, 2012, for example, is nothing but the shadow of a black palm tree growing out of a paint can. But there's a disconnect: We clearly see both the real can filled with black paint and its ghostly analogue, but where is the palm tree that seems to be casting its shadow on the wall, an image that sways gently to and fro before our eyes? Why do we not feel the breeze? Object and shadow, material and image fail to cohere.

Of course, the tree is a projection, a video animation. Yet this relatively straightforward amalgam of object and video can provoke deep reflection on art and art theory. Fiškin shows us some basic elements of painting—light, shadow, and color—then puts them back together in a way that produces a picture, to be sure, but one that contradicts itself. At the same time, Fiškin lightly touches on the ancient question of whether art imitates nature. Yes, says the image of a tree. No, says the image when it speaks as a shadow that lacks a "natural" cause.

Fiškin constantly presents us with bewildering setups that contradict any familiar chain of cause and effect, forcing us to question what we take for granted. In *Unplugged*, 2010, a lightbulb glows, even though its cord is unplugged; there is a hidden one, as you might guess. Fiškin also deceives us with *Don Quixote Pact*, 2010–12. This installation presents what looks like an ideal energy exchange, but this is achieved only with external impetus: Five fans and a wind turbine are positioned opposite each other in such a way that each appears to be driving the other. The wind turbine generates the energy used to power the fans, whose action, in turn, keeps the turbine in rotation. But without an initial impulse, nothing would move, and even while already in motion, the fans require additional energy.

Fiškin's work might fit somewhere between the jerry-rigged apparatus of an obsessive high school science teacher and the slicker exhibits at a natural history museum. But this nod to scientific displays is not an end in itself. Fiškin employs the familiar only to give us a false sense of security, lead us astray, and then show us that he has done so—in the process putting both our senses and our reasoning abilities to the test. But whether his simple devices are used, to recall some of his past works, to make stars dance (*Moving Stars*, 2006), to let snow fall on visitors' heads (*Snow Show*, 2000), or to keep the sun from ever setting (*Sun Stop*, 2003), he is always showing us natural phenomena that can exist only in our imagination. In other words: He makes art.

—Astrid Mania

Translated from German by Oliver E. Dryfuss.

SHARE PERMALINK COMMENTS (0 COMMENTS)