

Christopher Williams

AF artforum.com/picks/christopher-williams-81954



Christopher Williams, *Bergische Bauernscheune, Junkersholz, Leichlingen* September 29, 2009, 2010, archival pigment print, 20 x 24".

Berlin

C/O Berlin

Hardenbergstraße 22-24 Amerika-Haus

December 7, 2019–February 29, 2020

In Christopher Williams's 2015 Whitechapel exhibition "The Production Line of Happiness," the artist retained and incorporated the wall labels of the Malevich-inspired group exhibition "Adventures of the Black Square" that had immediately preceded his presentation. To further emphasize the reference to the previous exhibition, Williams fabricated wallpaper with lurid green stripes inspired by the French Conceptualist, Daniel Buren. The effect was surprising, incisive, and expedient, striking a dialogue between the historical legacies of abstraction and his own work. In their battered form, the walls appeared in a state of ruin, serving as a striking contrast to the sheen of Williams's own crisp photographs that cited the image economy of advertising, pornography, and display.

In the project's most recent iteration here, hand-painted signs with the word "model" are distributed throughout the gallery. In this instance, the model in question is conceived as a capacious category: Models for thought, pedagogical models, pornography models,

model showrooms, model books, and the like are photographed and cited in the exhibition's displays. In the first vitrine, for instance, Williams presents two versions of wood-chip plasterboard *Rauhfaser*, inviting us to investigate the minimal differences between the material produced in West Germany versus in the GDR. Indeed, throughout the show, it often feels like you are simply staring at plasterboard, for, unlike the artist's unexpected pairings of 2015, this iteration seems sedate and overwrought.

Williams's attraction to the modes of the production, distribution, and circulation of photography within capitalist society, at this particular juncture in time, reads as an especially academic and toothless version of institutional critique: content with asking the same questions, but ultimately ineffective in confronting the demands of the present and the dystopia of screens through which happiness is now force-fed.

— Andrew Witt