



The Great Wide Open

LISA CACCIOPPOLI

Residency: September 4 - October 15, 2005

Exhibition: October 14 - November 12



The OWLs of *The Great Wide Open* are persistent THINGS. They beckon our scrutiny, solicitude and a private tête-à-tête. Don't try to read these paintings left to right either, looking for some LeWittian illusion to reason; there is no alphabet or mathematic equation hidden in their deployment. It is through their sheer repetition that they deny any linear narrative and in turn, their placement rejects any implication of code. Instead, Lisa Caccioppoli has furnished the OWL with possibility; expression,

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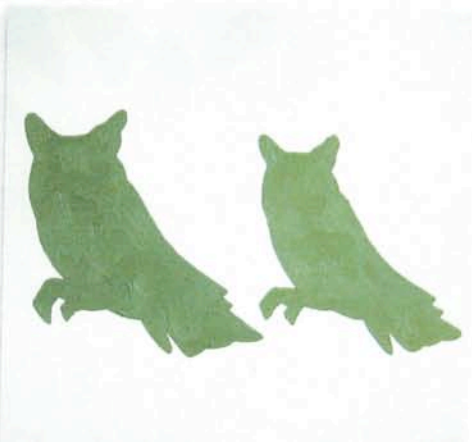
detail, and spatial depth have been dismissed. There is no experience being illustrated by *The Great Wide Open*, there is only experience to be had, and Caccioppoli is not providing a prescription.

I do not seek to define the moment, but I will suggest that now is a moment of pop-culture fluency. We are fluent in the icons of not only our culture, but also a vast global culture that has brought us Bollywood, anime and French fries. Images today seem bereft of possibility, as the THING – let us say the red-white-and-blue rubber ball – is so congested, that it can no longer be simply an interaction with a THING. We cannot play with the ball without soda-pop, cola wars, patriotism, commercialism, playing along with us. When a THING is subject to such an identity crisis, so impregnated with ideas, references and concepts, it ceases to have agency over itself: it is spurned and in-turn becomes meaningless.

As individuals, we strategize to make personal icons out of the THING. Images and objects are adopted as allegorical illustrations or depictions of personal narrative, the THING becoming emblematic of the author: ME. As an authoritative gesture, the creator prescribes the experience, defiantly asserting his or her genius by defining artwork as a reflection of the singular and the personal. In a bid for empathy, an artwork attempts collusion between author and viewer through narrative things: a wink-wink moment where everyone remembers the same universal experience. Whether deer, rainbows, or heavy metal redux, culture quickly adopts new emblems as ICON in a moment of manifest zeitgeist.

If The Great Wide Open frustrates any inclination towards that faux universality, it is not out of spite for the viewer, but out of respect for autonomous experience. There is no relationship between author and viewer, but between viewer and art. The OWL retains content of its own but Caccioppoli makes no attempt to divest it, she simply does not attempt to occupy the owl herself. Her decisions are formal; her authorship in the making of the object – the surface and boundary emphasis, the color shifts, the size of the OWL – is allowing the painting, and its audience, agency. The OWLS of The Great Wide Open are THING again; their meaning lies in their potential.

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