

REVIEW OF EXHIBITIONS

NEW YORK

Pierre Bismuth at both Mary Boone galleries and Team

Three shows of work by the Brussels-based French artist Pierre Bismuth revolved around themes of fame,

advertising and brand recognition in the art world. No stranger to celebrity himself—he shared an Oscar for the screenplay of *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)—Bismuth is not a dour scold about commerce in art. His playfully ironic interventions take such forms as large-scale tourist photos graffitied with the name of one or another currently prominent artist. For example, “Damien Hirst” and “Maurizio Cattelan” are spray-painted on photos of the American flag; “Elizabeth Peyton” and “Richard Prince” are scrawled on nighttime cityscapes; and “Olafur Eliasson” is painted on the silver door of a garage.

These works were shown at Mary Boone uptown in an exhibition titled “Most Wanted Men,” which perhaps alludes not only to the FBI posters but also to the project created for the 1964 World’s Fair by Andy Warhol, Bismuth’s most important ancestor in negotiating the conceptual bridge between celebrity and art. Bismuth asks us to locate artistic personae amid the mix of the purely self-promotional graffitist’s tag and the bland, generic expressiveness of the tourist’s postcard. He makes further mischief with artists’ names in wallpaper that covered an adjacent room with indiscriminate, but somehow plausible, combinations of artists’ first and last names (Ed Buren, Marcel Nauman, Andy Ruscha). An installation about putting a

name rather than a work on the wall, it was also about employing art—particularly the widely collected variety—as decor.

In a reversal of another sort at Mary Boone in Chelsea, reproductions of advertising pages for Bismuth’s shows from the March issues of *Artforum* and *Art in America* were blown up to freestanding 18-foot-high slabs. With a cheeky reference to the ostensible purity of grandiose minimalist constructions, these objects transformed the gallery into a promotional tool for a show in which advertisements themselves took center stage.

The most compelling work on view, one that offered more than art-world *blagues*, is *Following the right hand of . . .* (2007), shown at Team. In this projected video of John Huston’s 1961 film *The Misfits*, every gesture of the movie’s star, Marilyn Monroe, produces a thick animated black line, which forms a dense skein that eventually obscures the whole image. Bismuth here took his cues, perhaps, from two other star vehicles: Hans Namuth’s film of Jackson Pollock painting, shot from beneath a glass plate as the artist covered it in drips and pours, and Henri-Georges Clouzot’s movie of Picasso at work, filmed in part from behind a translucent painting surface that conceals the artist, though his brushwork is visible. Without any of the ponderousness such a description might imply, Bismuth’s remade

video is about how star power occludes our interest in the object itself, wiping out an esthetics of art with an esthetics of fame.

—Jonathan Gilmore



Left to right, Pierre Bismuth: *Art in America*, pp. 11/12 and *Artforum*, pp. 25/26, both 2007, inkjet print on vinyl mounted on aluminum; at Mary Boone Chelsea.