

"I Always New You Were The Shape"  
Guy Benfield

1 July – 5 August, 2017  
Opening: 1 July, 4-6 PM

Press Release: Essay by Rebecca Holborn

Brilliant Magenta, Tasman Blue, Intense Viridian, Jaune Brilliant, Naples Yellow Reddish, Light Cinnabar Green, Celadon Green Pale, Dioxin Mauve. Domestic pale magentas and blue violets. Stilts slip over pink and abstract foliage, which creeps around them. A hypnagogic nickelodeon, which is an unconscious space, reordered into a conscious space. Made up of motifs constructed as figural abstractions, a montage of imagery and indexical forms shift towards an aesthetic of cartoon abstraction. The cartoon is used as a language to express more serious concerns, but under the ruse of diplomatic physics, a common symbolic order, and a re-knitting of retro-romanticisms.

The paintings' signifiers link them to a network of abstraction, and also to that of mechanical reproduction. This indicates an intention of raising parallels, but here stitched together as patchwork not at all the same as their origin, but something new – here is contemporary scope for an ontological precarity.

In advertising, assimilation imagery is historically used to capture audiences; doctrines are hidden beneath layers of romantic value-based images. Corporatised images attempt to fill the empty vessel of 'flattened celebrity' or another indeterminate prop with values (Shudson, 1984). These paintings are satirical inversions which provide a commentary on the construction of doctrines. The paintings are intentional. Their relationship to Pop, advertising, and what some people have suggested is to do with the internet, presents neither reality nor an entirely fictional world. Benfield inserts himself into this alternate transitory space, a space where there is no dull-space, a space where the value of promoting and assimilating capitalist societal values overshadows other societal values.

Figural layering in Benfield's paintings should be understood as affected by digital sublimity and the accelerationist context – or intentional articulations of time. Certain brushstrokes, the placement of certain objects, choices of particular colours, forms, reconstituted aesthetic motifs – they are indexical and escapist at once, which is a reflection of the media that surround us all today.

Benfield's generative practices include performance (including the Meisner technique), but are established around painterly concerns. This has culminated in a high use of 'paint', and other visceral media, and revisions of mythology. The concern for mythology that lies beneath the artist's storytelling has seen the works produced under the filmic condition.

Throughout his career as an artist, Benfield has explored the connection between the Gutai movement and abstract expressionism through performance, painting, film and video. The Gutai movement, a performance painting group which was a starting point for postwar art in Japan and had a historical connection to abstract expressionism via Pollock (who first exhibited in Japan in 1951), was a great influence for Benfield. Artists such as Yves Klein, Pollock, through to artists like Charlotte Moorman, flip the boundaries of performance, painting and the camera, and are relevant to Benfield's practice.

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These artists' works are about the subjected body, an assimilated form both passive and reduced. The body and the economy. The body inside the economy. Bit-parts of economy, borrowed figuration, abstractions, cartoons and nostalgia. Which makes sense for Benfield, an artist deeply influenced by the art-historical renditions of advertising (coming from a family of advertisers and artists). For Benfield, this is about commerce: commerce and losing.

These paintings are hypnagogic and poignantly reflective, but at the same time Pop and lightness ... quiet in this way, from a threshold consciousness. The fact that these are paintings from the threshold consciousness suggests that they are 'from the body', but at the same time are intentional in constructing a way of viewing information stitched together by the artist from external events. The events become simultaneous on the canvas, and a new story is made.

The fact that he manages to weave himself into this capitalist scape only shows the threadbare bricolage of the capitalist reality (or capitalist ideology).

Bibliography: Schudson, Michael. *Advertising: The Uneasy Persuasion. Its Dubious Impact on American Society*. Basic Books, A Member of the Perseus Books Group. 1984.

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