

ANNINA NOSEI GALLERY

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## Kocheisen + Hullmann

Be Prepared to Stop

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There is, or should be, an element of trust involved in the relationship between painter and viewer, especially when the pictures involved deal with reality. It is not so much that verisimilitude represents truth, but that so-called reality is perhaps the last place where fact can be taken as faith. If we can't be sure of even everyday realities, perhaps it is time to go back to the desert and start all over again.

This is only one aspect of the questions raised by the collaborative art of Thomas Kocheisen and Ulrike Hullmann, who have worked together, but separately, as artists since 1986. Kocheisen and Hullmann have developed a project in which there exists a shared actuality; a photograph of a particular interior, a theme park or happened upon objects of curiosity that both artists found, at the very least, interesting. They are not in search of symbolic or narrative content or popular icons, but a subject worthy of scrutiny and documentation. Since 1988, that project has focused primarily on interiors, painted independently and without interference or interjection from the other, after which the paintings are placed side by side, presenting these two "viewpoints" simultaneously. What is surprising, even unsettling (see above) is that, given equivalent skills in rendering, their perceptions/representations are so different. Light, weight, formal emphasis and mood, not to mention scale and proportion, vary in very subtle but distinct ways. The impulse to check out the photograph is superseded by recalling the multiple versions of "what really happened" in Kurosawa's *Rashomon*, suggesting that the truth, if there is one, lies somewhere between the two.

Now Kocheisen and Hullmann have embarked on a new course; adding to the equation abstractions based on the original motif. Here the artists find themselves in search of what made that chosen motif appealing, and how to abstract from it an essence. The complete piece is now four panels, in a line or as a group, providing us with yet another mystery of identity and paradox. Self-imposed objectivity making room(s) for the subjective self. When you add the element of gender obfuscation (a game worthy of any armchair analyst), the notion of reality becomes that much more arbitrary. Perhaps this is the ultimate revelation to be gleaned from the complex yet accessible art of Kocheisen + Hullmann; that the nature of reality is multi-layered and full of far more thought provoking potential than most of us, other than a few poets and painters, imagine.

Robert G. Edelman

