

Geerten Verheus

The Limits of Almost

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Adverbs can describe descriptions. The 'Duden', an authority on the German language, lists as a subdivision of adverbs the 'descriptions of limitations in extent, of restriction, of approximation, of uncertainty' and offers examples such as: 'He had almost forgotten about it. Nearly everyone owned a car. He just about / pretty much completed the work. That is roughly / pretty much the same. That work turned out partly / fairly / halfway how he had planned it.'

The nominalized adverb 'almost' that this second exhibition by Geerten Verheus bears in its title is somewhat elusive. The adverb that characterizes a situation or event more precisely, brings into play a second layer of describing, whereas a noun simply describes something by itself. This contrast provides the formally diverse sculptures, collages and vitrines in the exhibition with a common denominator: they all strive for a state of almostness that they evoke through various scenarios, operating in the field between abstraction and figuration.

The title of the exhibition almost matches that of an essay on the art of Ad Reinhardt that Yve-Alain Bois published in 1991. This wink can be explained using the example of the largest two-part wall piece on display: Two black rubber mats turn themselves inside out over white slabs of styrofoam, each superimposed over a colourless support structure. It remains unclear which elements of this arrangement is sculpture and which is covering or packing materials. Upside Out Inside Down (L&R) examines the artistic confines between industrial production on one side – originally reflected through the ready-made and directed towards serialism and the monochromatic – and the creative spirit of the individual that the artist, with the meticulous precision of his craftsmanship, pays reference to. Against the backdrop of Reinhardt's modernism or explorations such as Factum I and Factum II by Robert Rauschenberg, Upside Out Inside Down (L&R) appears to be not only a playful comment on its role models, but advances into those ambivalences that can be 'neither painting nor sculpture' (Donald Judd).

Scenarios of indeterminability generally mark the exhibition and – pars pro toto – individual works in the exhibition. Manifesting themselves as constructions of analogies and defects, they manage to involve the viewer through the intellectual retracing of the fabrication process whilst simultaneously inducing a sense of reserve by the alienating choice of materials used. It is as much a familiar semblance of a venetian blind, limping by its fabrication in soft transparent vinyl, newsprint cut outs held between glass plates, or a canopy turned holy waterbasin, as it is the abstract and complex incidents within experimental arrangements in a group of display cases, alluding to a mediation between sculpture and collage. One could say, that in this exhibition 'That work turned out partly / fairly / halfway how he had planned it' could serve as sign of utmost succeeding.