

ANDREW BICK

School Studies: Andrew Bick, Abstract Critical, 17 December 2012



Andrew Bick, *Mirror Variant Exit Version*, 2008-2012

School studies: Ghosts, Arguments, Bick's chosen title for this body of new work, is an exhibition celebrating his exploration in to the multiple legacies of Modernism and its aftermath. The show, as the title suggests, divides into three linking areas of recent enquiry.

School Studies, is taken from the title of an essay by Simon Weile, a writer whose ideas have influenced Bick for over a decade, but also doubles as a description of the way in which Bick approaches the making of a work. "School" here works as a setting of perimeters and boundaries, a place of control within which a series of experiments can take place. Bick's breaking open of his own self-imposed rules has become a touchstone of his work. Bick is particularly fond of the system based geometric art of the British constructivists of the 1960s, who have been the subject of a number of his recent curatorial projects. Bick's dialogue with the work of several of these artists, (particularly Anthony Hill and Systems painter Jeffrey Steele) is explored in several of the works in this exhibition. His curation and writing is a statement of his respect for their work, and yet in his own work, Bick's mischievous

meddling with the nature of a previous generation's guiding principles, allows for a serious engagement with them, whilst also stretching the parameters of their work to address the concerns of a new environment.

"Ghosts" is a word that Bick has been using to title an entire body of paintings made over the last ten years. The works repeat the form and structure of a previous work from Bick's oeuvre which is then hollowed out to its barest structure and drained of colour. The resulting works are ephemeral and almost fade from view but gain the viewer's attention through the tension produced between the delicate and nuanced nature of their painting and the self-mocking critique of nostalgia implied in copying his own earlier work. They are memories of paintings whist still being entities within themselves, a kind of constructivist un-dead. A new dimension to this method of working appears in a two panel work, *Mirror Variant Exit Version*, 2008-2012 where the grid composition on a wood support is mirrored on an elaborately frosted and CNC routed plexi-glass structure so that it acts as an echo, but an echo of a ghost.

Bick's wilful distrust of his own skills as a painter introduces an element of antagonism into the mix. Sometimes the successful outcome for him is in the ruination of a composition where several opposing elements or materials fight for supremacy. This debate (which Bick refers to as Argument) can be present in fractured triangular forms or the seemingly random splodges of gloopy wax, marker pen or paint that are at odds with the clean geometric balance achieved by many of Bick's constructivist heroes. In another demonstration of antagonism, one of the works, OGVDS [tilted] A, is also hung across the corner of the gallery as a deliberately mischievous echo of Malevich's 1915 010 exhibition. Choosing to hang this painting across the corner is not just about mischief and affection for the history of abstraction but also acts as a serious engagement into the way material objects and qualities generate particular qualities of attention. All of these elements are used to burst the boundaries of his own self imposed restrictions and, through contradiction, to reinvent a kind of poetic constructed art for a new era.