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GAGOSIAN GALLERY

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Anselm Reyle

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New York One prominent Chelsea gallerist called Anselm Reyle's "Monochrome Age" exhibition at Gagosian (his first at this gallery), "the most hated show in Chelsea." Indeed, the 19 works of sculpture here are grand, ranging in size but trending between human size and monumental. They're flashy without exception, and sometimes even

flashing. So the immediate protest is taken for granted: Reyle's work is terribly, wantonly out of step with our chastened, purified times. *Relief*, 2009, is a grid of 45 plastic panels in two sail molds (exhibited in other permutations elsewhere), which shield variable LED controlled by computer. The lights glow on the floor and in the cracks in the grid like the new lights on New York City buses, and they seem to yearn for installation in a boutique hotel.

Reyle is well documented as quoting heavily from historical movements, mass producing forms once considered avant-garde in his notoriously large studio, and covering them with a shiny coat of industrial material. The exhibition title itself, "Monochrome Age," suggests the commensuration of post-war painting and Minimalism as readily digested luxury object. Pop is a complicit victim in this regurgitation; every sculpture here is covered in car paint and chrome, and the artist makes a special point to use the same factories that give automobiles that masculine, hard-edged surface paint job. The metaphor for the digestion of European post-war painting by American car culture is a strangely dated one, but the artist's vocabulary of cliché is above all faultless. But Reyle's special target here is Arte Povera: *Straw Bales*, 2009, are just that, covered in chrome. They seem to reference Jannis Kounellis' horses and Pino Pascale's organic blocks in equal, generic parts. Three such bales lie in a stack; another is in a vitrine, rendered as an object for study, a bench, or a caged pet. Such is Reyle's powers of absorption: If you Google "Arte Povera straw," the present exhibition occupies the entire first page of results.



What's probably more outrageous, from the perspective of a contemporary dealer, is Reyle's *Untitled* series (2007–2009), for which Reyle collects found objects like gears and chains from a local flea market, and coats them with chrome and enamel varnish. *Untitled, 2007*, a collection of said detritus covered in yellow, would be a direct quotation of John Miller's gilded assemblages, if it didn't pre-date Miller's first exhibition of the series in 2008. Miller's golden objects—ostensibly junk but favoring domestic objects and weaponry—coincide with the artist's body of critical writings, and reference the artist's own, earlier similar-but-brown "shit" sculptures. For Miller, gold is a psychological symbol for the waste sublimated by consumption—which, if you think about it, is an anecdote that handsomely complements the object. Viewing Reyle's works, it's frighteningly difficult to disagree with his homogenization of criticality and process into slick salable object—or even his seductive, slapdash pastiche of historical styles as a symptom of a specifically contemporary memory. Yet if design vs. the art object is the most cliché art historical trope, Reyle elevates it singularly as a trope with lessons about originality still to teach. (LEFT: UNTITLED, 2009. COURTESY GAGOSIAN GALLERY)