

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



London – Mark Grotjahn: “Pink Cosco” at Gagosian Gallery Through September 17th, 2016

A. Corrigan



Mark Grotjahn, *Pink Cosco* (Installation View), All artworks © Mark Grotjahn. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian Gallery.
Installation photography: Mike Bruce

Continuing his inquiries into the modes of perspective, constraint and repetition at play in the modes of contemporary art practice, Los Angeles-based painter Mark Grotjahn brings a new series of works to Gagosian Gallery in London, under the title *Pink Cosco*. Reprising several of his previous forms, particularly his painted “mask” sculptures, executed in bronze and covered in varied layers and styles of paint, Grotjahn again insists upon the beauty and precision to be discovered in variations on a theme.

While Grotjahn’s work has often dwelled on repeated forms, this is the first show by the artist dedicated only to his masks. While creating the *Butterfly* series of paintings, the artist began to construct the original masks from cardboard boxes found around his studio, using them as an escape from the precision his other paintings required. He molded, painted, and cut the cardboard, adding toilet paper rolls for noses in each piece, offering a comical relief from the demanding work of his other projects. The pieces in the *Masks* series pose a similar uniformity to the *Butterfly* paintings, with their shared yellow and pink palettes and long, tubular noses, each transferred into a more permanent mode through their casting in bronze.

As the exhibition press materials describe, Grotjahn works along conceptions and exchanges in time, particularly between past and future. His works pull from Op art, abstraction, and pop in equal measure, yet their final form points more to an unspecified future form rather than an

easily-read amalgamation of these influences. The *Masks*, for example, represent the artist's "methodical efforts to occupy, represent, and envelop space." Each item in this series is signed and marked with the date on which it was produced, brandishing the details of their individual generation for public consumption beyond a mere record-keeping.

The title of this exhibition comes from the name of a Cosco brand stepladder, reportedly used by the artist to reach far corners and paint the furthest reaches of his surfaces. The ladder's cardboard box, in turn, offered one of the first surfaces on which Grotjahn could paint and create his new masks. The masks, all arranged on wooden pedestals, look down their long cardboard noses with disdain, possessing the same formulaic restrictions of materials and colors originally seen in the *Butterfly* series.

In this exhibition, Grotjahn's work speaks to both the subtle and overt variations that comes with any act repetition, reclaiming the unrelated releases of energy from his *Butterflies* as a series of works in their own right. The bold, centrally located artist's signature and date emphasize the importance of time in this series, and relate themselves to work done elsewhere in the artist's canon. While explicitly referencing art history and their own creation, these forms insist upon the present moment, and the multiplicities of time that they imply. Suggesting transformation through repetition, and offering another glimpse into the Grotjahn's productive explorations of time, methodical repetition, and precision, *Pink Cosco* runs through September 17th.