

Johnen Galerie

ARTFORUM

Ryan Gander

14.12.2006

Ryan Gander

12.14.06

AUTHOR: CHRISTOPHER BEDFORD

11.18.06-12.23.06 MARC FOXX

The undeclared meta-theme of Ryan Gander's complex, opaque, and at times perspicacious show is the nature and value of the conventional art object in contemporary practice. More than thirty years after the dawn of Conceptual art, this may seem a rather passé preoccupation, but since it has recently become apparent that we are in the midst of another "fine art" renaissance—witness the swift ascent of anyone who can draw decently—his question is timely (again) if not exactly radical. Gander is not interested in presenting the viewer with dematerialized objects that teeter on the cusp of nonexistence. Instead, his work implicitly contests the presupposition that artistic merit is predicated first and foremost on visual interest; it claims that value, if such a thing exists or can be measured, is commensurate with the degree of *intellectual* curiosity engendered by his patently unremarkable objects. Accordingly, the gallery appears as a production in progress featuring, among other things, life-size photographs of two corkboards strewn with images and texts, which are juxtaposed with the corkboards themselves, stripped of imagery and sun-stained to reveal elegant monochrome abstractions reminiscent of Ad Reinhardt at his most austere. Elsewhere, wooden blocks are piled on the floor, three monitors record the repetitive movements of a bouncing white ball, terse statements on the gallery wall direct the viewer from one object to the next, and colored strips of tape on the floor seemingly demarcate nothing in particular. Needless to say, clever, cryptic connections exist between these objects. Artistic production is thus thematized to the point where every object in the show appears potentially unfinished, provisional, or temporary, a strategy that successfully encourages playful curiosity, even if not quite sustaining visual engagement.