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Conor Backman

Mrs. Fibonacci's Traditional False Color Broccoli with Orange Sauce

Opening: September 27, 2014

"…In that empire, the art of cartography attained such perfection that the map of a single province occupied the entirety of a city, and the map of the empire, the entirety of a province. In time, those unconscionable maps no longer satisfied, and the cartographers' guilds struck a map of the empire whose size was that of the empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following generations, who were not so fond of the study of cartography as their forebears had been, saw that that vast map was useless, and not without some pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the inclemencies of sun and winters. In the deserts of the West, still today, there are tattered ruins of that map, inhabited by animals and beggars; in all the land there is no other relic of the disciplines of geography."
- Suárez Miranda, Viajes de varones prudentes, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lérida, 1658

Annarumma is pleased to present *Mrs. Fibonacci's Traditional False Color Broccoli with Orange Sauce*, a show of recent paintings and sculpture by New York-based artist Conor Backman. His first solo exhibition with the gallery, *Mrs. Fibonacci* finds the artist continuing his ongoing explorations of representation, reproduction, origin, and iteration.

Central to Backman's work is the process of translation: exploring the spaces between material and simulated states, he favors a highly fluid presentation, layering references, fidelities, and formats to purposefully disorienting ends. Digital prints are rendered in paint before being converted back to autonomous images; descaled reproductions of the physical world at once signify and supplant their corporeal counterparts; trompe l'oeil treatments ardently blur the line between authentic and imitation, copy and source: at each turn, Backman willfully combines and confounds disparate means of visual production, creating works which offset conceptual densities with aesthetic returns, the presumed line between direct and mediated experience now suddenly, grippingly obscure.

For this exhibition, Backman has produced ten new works representing two of his most recent series. The first set, titled "Painting Palettes," finds the artist producing oil paintings based on photographs of palettes from previous works. As

he meticulously reproduces their offhanded daubs and markings, Backman mixes his pigments on the surface of the canvas itself, combining the perfunctory marks and represented gestures into singular, intuitive compositions. The finished works comprise two distinct elements – an image of a palette alongside an actual one – which, while having occurred simultaneously and from the same material, are nonetheless autonomous, neither any more or less "real" or than the other. With an effect not dissimilar to viewing a painting and its documentation simultaneously, the final images are at once physical and flattened, abstracted and enhanced by the artist's recursive methods of (re-)production.

Where earlier works in the series were rendered from aggressively cropped detail shots, however, this new sequence of canvases explores a more direct (if varied) approach, with the ratio of palette-to-canvas dimensions ascending from 1:1 to 1:8 over the course of the five works on view; where the rendered strokes of the smallest painting retain the scale of the original markings, the newly mixed paints of the largest work occupy an area roughly the same size as the entire corresponding palette.

Also on view are five works from Backman's series "The Sun Never Sets," which finds the artist mounting hand-painted, highly detailed casts of orange peels upon the plexiglass surfaces of framed reproductions of homolosine projections (popularly known as "orange peel maps"). Like an inversion of the Borges fable quoted above, the underlying images gradually descend in scale as the series unfolds, ebbing until they've finally been obfuscated by –and incorporated into – the overlaid reliefs. As distinctions between subject and simulation collapse to form a single co-existing entity, the resulting works function as an analog to the problems of representational painting itself, which similarly translates its subjects into images through a process of reductive flattening.

Like so much of Backman's output, the works on view in *Mrs. Fibonacci* ultimately seek meaning in the in-between: balancing a disparate range of materials, techniques, and external sources, they occupy multiple states simultaneously, pointing towards an underlying instability which, while certainly bolstered by ongoing developments in digital technology, has always been inherent to the relationship between object and image. In applying fresh strategies to a longstanding set of concerns, these works find their vitality in variability, at once embodying and extending the formal diversity, material inventiveness, and blurring of narratives that continue to drive his broader practice.

Conor Backman (b.1988) earned BFAs in Sculpture and Painting from VCU (Richmond, VA) in 2011. His work has been included in group exhibitions at James Fuentes, NYC; Aran Cravey, Los Angeles, CA; Evelyn Yard, London; Higher Pictures, NYC; Stadium, NYC; and Saamlung in Hong Kong, among

others. His most recent solo exhibitions include Diorama (Mixed Greens, New York, NY, 2013) and The Other Real (Nudashank Gallery, Baltimore, MD, 2013). Backman was co-owner of REFERENCE Art Gallery in Richmond, VA, from 2009-2012. He currently lives and works in Hudson, New York.