



Copied hybrids A talk with Karl Patric Näsman

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Karl Patric's work often stresses the issue of what's real and what's fake, questioning what value is and what determines it. By exploring the potential of painting, his work connotes to the late 20th century postmodern appropriation practice, raising questions on what's considered high and low art. Earlier this year Näsman was awarded the Fredrik Roos Art Grant. At the exhibition that followed, in Moderna Museet in Malmö, Karl Patric showed pieces from his project Shanghai Pearl Market (2015). In this project Näsman collaborated with the Shanghai-based artist Jiang Weitao in an examination of the shanzhai phenomenon, the Chinese conception of the copy as equivalent of the original. This play with value is evident when looking at the work he included in the show. Dashed oil paint maculates the canvases with a high polished surface. The big oil paintings resemble slabs of stone, marble, granite.

I meet Karl Patric at his shared studio in the suburbs of Stockholm. He is just in the process of preparing his solo show at Nau Gallery's reopening at Karlavägen 5 in September. The entire space is filled with canvases leaning against the walls and sketches spread over the floor. Karl Patric tells me about his new interest in panels where both paintings and prints of the paintings are conjoined to one big piece. We are lead to believe that it is all the same due to the almost exact appearance – exposing how arbitrary the value of real and fake is.

N.H. When looking around here I recognize that many of these pieces build on spatial elements. This interests me because I perceive you as a painter.

K.P.N. I feel that I've started to work with my paintings more architecturally by viewing them as objects to be placed in the room. The folding screen, as a way to present my painting, is something I've been interested to investigate more. I'm interested in the historical aspects of the folding screen – as an object which purpose has been redefined as it became integrated in Western culture in the 17th century. In Asia, the folding wall has had a more functional use, as an object to divide, open up and close of rooms when in Europe it could almost have sexual implications, as it creates intimate spaces. Further it has signified status, as appropriating "exotic" objects is a way to manifest one culture's superiority over another. I see this exhibition as the end for the Shanghai Pearl Market, the project I have been working with for a couple of years.

N.H. This seems to connect to your earlier work and appropriation is something recurring in different ways in your practice. Both by appropriating yourself, making others imitate you and appropriation of other materials; as Thomas Elovsson described it, a "copy of a copy of a copy". I know you have been to China quite a lot and there is an obvious connection to your work and the center of the world's production. I'm especially thinking about the phrase Made in China.

K.P.N. I was there last time in January/February this year. This time the trip was a bit more business-oriented. I visited a city called Shenzhen, known for being an economic hub as well as the one of the largest manufacturing bases in the world. The idea was to go there to find factories. I got especially interested in furniture manufacturers that made copies of well-known modernist furniture of designers such as Arne Jacobsen and Mies van der Rohe. I claimed I wanted to produce a chair with one of them, which I eventually did, and was invited to meetings and guided tours of the factory. I personated a businessman, taking



“I like the idea of mixing originals and copies to create confusion. What is real and what is fake? And is it important?”

invited to meetings and guided tours of the factory. I personated a businessman, taking about shipping, invoices and custom declarations. The chair that I produced is a hybrid between the Rietveld chair and a so-called Ming chair. I also ended up producing carpets based on my paintings, like a crafted version of the paintings.

N.H. It sounds to me like a lot of commonplace objects, which I think is interesting – how come you want to explore that?

K.P.N. My point of departure is often from the questions of the distinction between high and low art, art and craft and precious and inexpensive materials. At the moment I feel very interested in the object as a hybrid. It could be different styles combined, like with the chair, but also combining ready-mades from China with handmade sculpture. In this exhibit, my point of departure has come from interior and furniture versus sculpture. Maybe I'm heading in an opposite direction than many other young artists, who want to produce for museums and galleries. At the moment I'm really drawn to the idea that my painting and sculpture could be in the domestic sphere, where a painting could be used to divide a room. I like to play with the idea of almost degrading my art – heading in the wrong direction. I think it is grounded in my fascination for value shifting, being redefined and degenerated.