

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Kim Fisher: China Art Objects

by Michael Ned Holte

Kim Fisher has always been explicitly invested in fashion and its inevitable intertwining with that other elite pursuit, "advanced" art: Her earliest exhibited paintings replicated the signature color and typography of Tiffany bags. She followed these with a series of canvases that riffed on the logo for Andre Courreges, the 1960s designer of the go-go boot and the "moon girl" look. In 2000, she unveiled a series of provocative paintings that featured richly pigmented angular shapes based on beryls, or gemological facets, often augmented with intricate silk-screen images of jewelry, and executed on boisterous supports of raw linen stretched, quite deliberately, on the bias and left partially or fully unattached to the back of stretcher, resulting in a splayed "frame" of surplus linen. These paintings succeeded by exploiting dynamic tensions between structure and ornamentation, as well as the flatness of the painting's surface and the pronounced, even awkward, objecthood of the support--a dimensional tension that is in fact suggested by the prismatic subject matter.

Fisher's "oh, why not?" experimentation with stretching raw linen seemed derived less from an interest in the unavoidable precedents of Robert Ryman or the French Supports/Surfaces group than with acknowledging the then-current rage for the material itself. Richard Hawkins described that moment by what he defined as "the 3/4 view," where the viewer lavishes nearly as much attention on the side of a painting as its front, "thinking that they've understood some overly apparent 'critique' of painting." More a couturier than a Greenbergian modernist, Fisher adopted raw linen not out of critique but, rather, through a desire to use the stuff more outrageously and, yes, more glamorously than any of her peers. In other words, her goal is not teleological but ontological: The rawness of the linen only really comes into being when put in contrast with paint as brilliant and refined as a perfectly cut jewel.

Seven paintings (all 2007) at China Art Objects--her first solo show at her hometown gallery since 2001--revealed the artist moving in two distinct, if interrelated, directions, strategically parceled into the gallery's two adjacent spaces. Three large, exuberant paintings in the bigger room clearly follow from Fisher's beryl paintings but begin to divorce the facets from the signifiers of gemology. *Seashell*, 31 indeed resembles a chambered nautilus cut into being with crisp, angular shapes of pinks, reds, and plums in warm electric tones; *Damaged*, 46 is formally attired in pitch black, grays, and white and recalls shattered crystal.

In the other room, three paintings emphasize a methodical process of painting on stretched linen, removing the linen from the bars, and restretching it diagonal to the orthogonal support. In *One*, the white-on-black painting extends beyond the grid and

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continues onto the linen that erupts from behind the bottom left corner of the support; in *Two*, Fisher employs bilateral symmetry to mirror a pair of small diagonal paintings on one piece of linen that have been reoriented on a larger stretcher; *Chain* combines nine rectangular paintings in a necklacelike configuration on a large vertical support. In each of these the residual trace of the creased

canvas becomes an explicit motif; in many ways the process recalls Dorothea Rockburne's remarkable "Drawing Which Makes Itself," a series of carbon-paper works from 1971-73. Like Rockburne, Fisher made--and unmade, and remade--these pieces with mathematical precision. While *Chain* features outbursts of deep color--orange, purple, magenta, and pink--Fisher's works in this room are spare and heavy on black and white, as if to intimate a seriousness that might have otherwise been missed. Fisher took no great leap forward in this show but mounted a confident, refined display that offered multifaceted possibilities for her brand.

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