

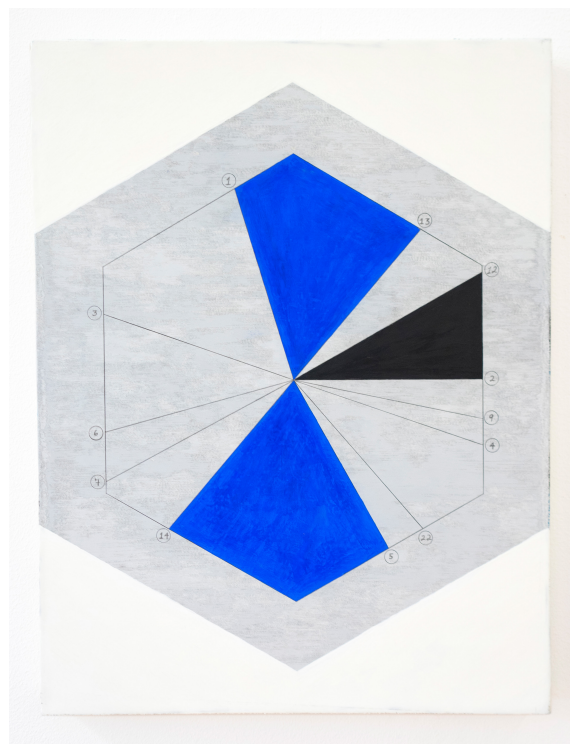
ARTFORUM

Conny Purtill
ADAMS AND OLLMAN
209 SW 9th Avenue
September 9, 2016–October 15, 2016

For his ongoing collaborative project *The Ground*, 2009–, the Los Angeles–based artist and book designer Conny Purtill at once plays an upfront authorial figure and gladly fades into the background, letting other artists take the spotlight. This balance comes from a process of exchange that has girded all four exhibited iterations of the project. Purtill first prepares uniformly sized canvases by applying eleven layers of alternating white and toned gesso, creating a painting then sanding it away, and, finally, subtly working the surface with graphite. Once this esoteric process, which he calls “neutralization,” is complete, he gifts the canvases to other artists to use as they like. Each work, then, as well as the exhibition itself, puns on the figure-ground relationship, framing a fundamental principle of painting in a conceptual context.

At Adams and Ollman, where Purtill’s collaborators include Jessica Jackson Hutchins, Josiah McElheny, and Matthew Ritchie, among others, the tension between author and orchestrator permeates the show. *The Ground: Sun Ra’s Color Time (Blue Black over Blue)*, 2015, made with McElheny, offers an abstracted clock face that appears to map non-linear time by hue—it fits perfectly with McElheny’s coolly cerebral, historically rooted work. Likewise, *The Ground: K.O. M.A. R.I.P.*, 2016, embodies Hutchins’s abiding theme of entwined domestic bliss and chaos, as a striped T-shirt and ceramic cup ride a lively surface of collage and smeared paint. Though traces of Purtill’s hand are difficult to detect in many of the collaborative works he presents, his role—somewhere between author and orchestrator—remains critical to their creation.

— John Motley



Josiah McElheny and Conny Purtill
The Ground: Sun Ra’s Color Time (Blue Black over Blue), 2015
hand-rubbed casein paint, colored oil pencil, gesso, India ink, pencil on canvas,
22 x 17”