



Gina Osterloh, *Untitled (Turquoise Room #4)*, 2007, light-jet, 48-1/2" x 60", at [2nd floor projects], San Francisco.

spasm and fever, Osterloh positions the enactment of these eruptive expressive states in paper sets, which are *blank* in the most literal sense of the word.

You could draw a thread and pull it taut between Osterloh's *Turquoise Room* series and Bruce Nauman's *Bound to Fail* (from a portfolio of eleven color photographs, 1966-67/1970). Like Nauman, Osterloh positions the immediacy of the artist's body, which literalizes a psychic state by depicting violent and dystopic physical states, in contrast with the distancing effect of straight photography. The pleasurable cruel humor of this strategy works as follows: The idea of the self in conflict with the world is an existential truth so ubiquitous that it's banal. However, the deadpan—or blank—staging of this drama turns the knife, and invests the commonplace struggle with a cruelty of such significance that it becomes interesting and uncomfortably humorous. In much good art now, blankness frequently operates according to this distancing strategy. (It can also be seen in plenty of less good work as merely a stylistic affect of conceptualism, a hang-over from minimalism.)

In Osterloh's work, blankness also describes the blankness of paper before text. Osterloh's paper sets, with their look and feel of an elementary school craft project, are innocent of inscription. Before the word is the emotion. And the emotion is superlative, excessive and waiting to excrete itself into the outside world.

The *athleticism* performed in Osterloh's project is gendered feminine. The body in its sequence of poses and orifices are passive, express reactivity, and potentially await sexual activation. The *Turquoise Room* series tracks a sequence of gestures as a vomiter's stance and excretions shift from frame to frame. In the sense that these gestures form an expressive vocabulary, the sequence evokes steps in a dance or an acrobatic sequence. The gestures also recall nineteenth-century pathologist Jean-Martin Charcot's inventory of hysterical pos-

tures—that is to say, gestures expressive of the neurosis related to the womb.

Osterloh uses her own self as the subject of these performative photographs, but only in a state of decapitation. In *Untitled (Turquoise Room)* taking the place of a face, a cascade of hair precedes the cascade of vomit that seems to flow from it. In a disturbance of Freudian proportions, the head (and with it the intellectual and rational self) is replaced with a hairy maw, a giant outpouring. Hair and vomit share expressive function, pouring out from the physical-emotional self and running interference along the perimeter of the outside world. In *Press and Erase #1*, a black-clad body compresses herself into a small shape, seemingly in anticipation of her journey through a trompe l'oeil hole of black craft paper. But also, the dark shape threatens to consume her head, or even more menacingly, threatens to *be* her head. Clearly, these craft paper interiors are not spaces for the intellect to reckon.

This is no real room. This is no real space. It's a diorama depicting concepts and ideas about real phenomena. There

are seams in the paper, where the ceiling fits the wall, or what would be ceilings and walls, were this a real space. The craft and crepe-paper dioramas remind me of school, conveying both a sense of possibility, and one of coercion and restraint. In previous exhibitions, Osterloh has shown work where a "tropical" sunset diorama is populat-

ed by bodies costumed in camouflage fatigues and business suits. Geopolitical conflict? The commingling of militarization and tourism in the U.S. empire? Osterloh's signifiers are blank but fully loaded with associations—current events, critical theory, the recollected moments from the history of art and visual culture—and these associations serve to quasi-contextualize Osterloh's bodily contortions, as though the richness of this signifying density is a strange meal that won't digest.

The psycho-drama of *Blank Athleticism* reaches its apogee in *Press and Erase #1*, which, like my friend's scab collection, challenges the viewer to experience a disgustingly fascinating principle. The black-clad body hovers at the recess, anticipating merger; but she is blocked by her own outstretched hands, which

yell "Stop!" Basic, semi-involuntary acts such as inhalation, exhalation, birth and excretion express diametrically conflicting sets of interests and pose the problem: How to be both inside and outside? Osterloh has just left for the Philippines on a Fulbright scholarship. There, I hope she will continue this difficult probing.

—Cassie Riger

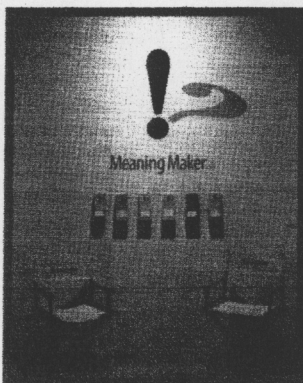
Gina Osterloh: *Blank Athleticism* closed in October at [2nd floor projects], San Francisco.

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'Moving Cultures' at the Euphrat Museum of Art

Reaching out to the community is already part of the mission of the Euphrat Museum of Art. Located on the campus of De Anza College, exhibitions as well as outreach programs invite interaction between artists, scholars, teachers, students and community members on an ongoing basis. Curator Jan Rindfleisch's attention to her audience is evident in the recent exhibition, *Moving Cultures (... all over the map)* which considers flux as a fact of life and a state of being. Considering the Euphrat's current cramped location as they await their new building's completion, Rindfleisch is operating within a particularly acute state of flux herself. Though

Left: Kent Manske and Nanette Wylde, *Meaning Maker*, 2007, conceptual intervention, vinyl sign, brochures, racks, chairs, 7' x 7' x 2'; below: Marta Sanchez with Norma Cantú, *R cigarro R barril*, 2002, offset lithograph, 29" x 21" (Photo: Philadelphia Photographics), at the Euphrat Museum of Art, De Anza College, Cupertino.



Gina Osterloh at [2nd floor projects]

At the age of ten, a friend ushered me into her canopy-bedded room and, with utter secrecy, showed me a white jewelry box filled with her own dried scabs. Gina Osterloh's *Blank Athleticism* scratched the same kind of itch.

Orifice and Color Field (Pink) and *Orifice and Color Field (Red)*, two framed C-prints that depict an open mouth adrift in a blank color field, greet one at the vestibule of [2nd floor projects]. In *Orifice and Color Field (Pink)* the mouth, filled with red cotton, is sunken into a scratchy, pink craft-paper skin. Like a bully's satisfaction with a well-delivered nosebleed, the bloodying of the cute color scheme and materials is cheerful in a mean sort of way. In *Orifice and Color Field (Red)* a red mouth disappears into a red color field like a hungry lipstick commercial, a good chuckle. In the gallery's main room, large ink-jet prints *Press and Erase #1* and *Untitled (Turquoise Room #1-5)* depict the drama of a self that simultaneously melds with and separates from its physical background. These works express a symbiotic exchange between the self—here, a physical body laden with emotion—and the external world. Drawing inspiration from the work of Gilles Deleuze, as well as the visceral experiences of rash, vomiting,