

CRITICISM » EXHIBITIONS

Tuesday, December 2nd, 2014

The Heart, the Mind, or Somewhere in Between: On Detlef E. Aderhold's "Null Komma Null"

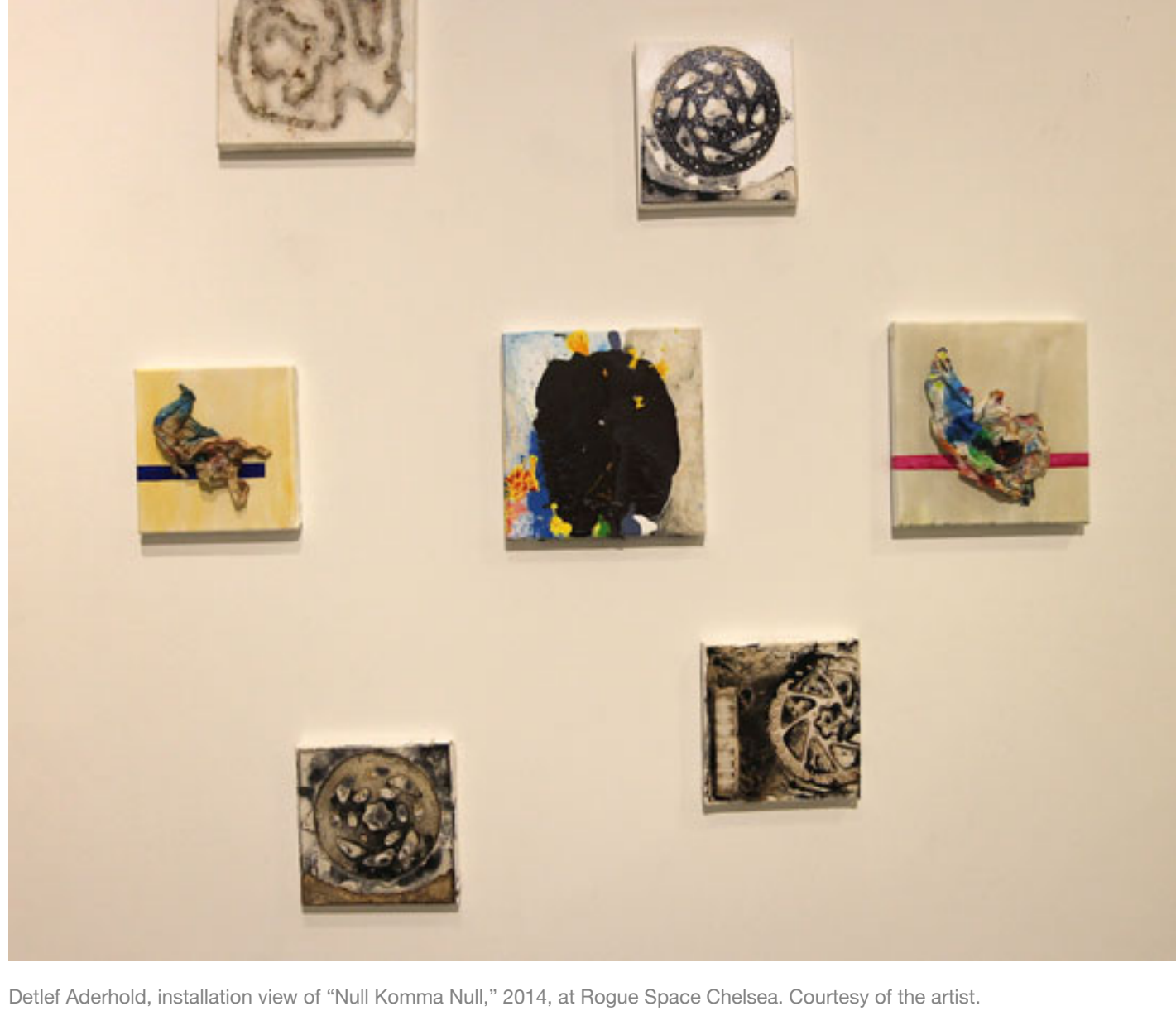
by Sabrina Mandanici

Detlef E. Aderhold: *Null Komma Null* at Rogue Space Chelsea

November 11 through November 17, 2014
508 West 26th Street, 9F (between 10th and 11th avenues)
New York, 212 751 2210

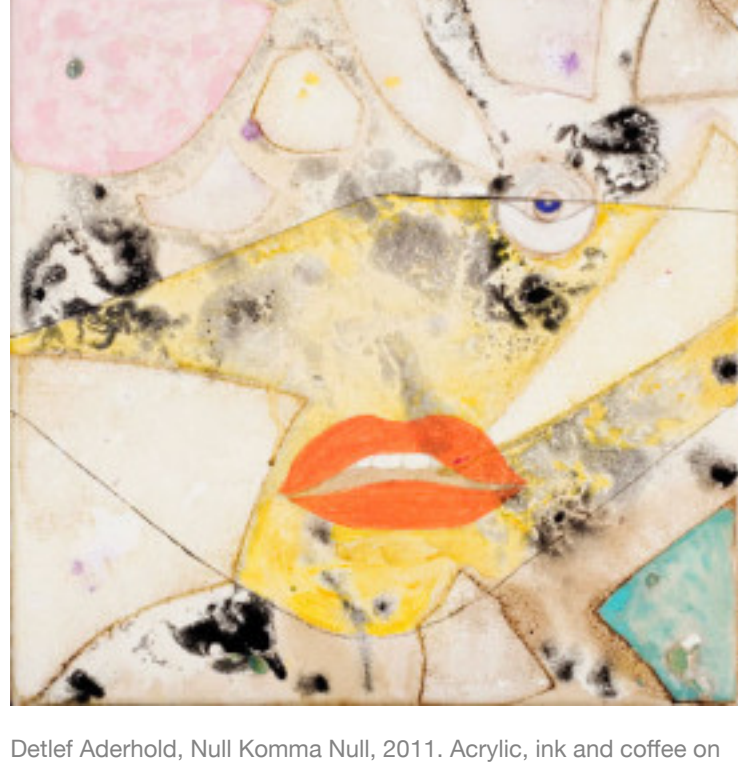
"*Nothing* is usually opposed to *something*; but the being of *something* is already determinate and is distinguished from another *something*; and so therefore the nothing which is opposed to the something is also the nothing of a particular something, a determinate nothing."
-G. F. W. Hegel

"Occasionally a painting calls out from beyond its surface and asks us for our attention. The asking is polite enough, like a meeting between two strangers."
-Eric Sutphin



Detlef Aderhold, installation view of "Null Komma Null," 2014, at Rogue Space Chelsea. Courtesy of the artist.

Hegel is not necessarily the kind of philosopher that comes to my mind when I look at or think about art, nor have I ever heard his arguments used as the subject of a conversation during an exhibition opening. However, at the opening of "Null Komma Null" — the German painter Detlef E. Aderhold's first solo show in New York — the term "aesthetic" circled within the gallery space. When used in more common, quotidian sense, "aesthetic" usually applies to a statement that is "concerned with beauty, art and the understanding of beautiful things," or describes something that is "made in an artistic way and beautiful to look at."^[1] The notion of "aesthetics" consequently connotes a positive perceptual judgment (as opposed to its negative sibling of "anesthetics") and evaluates a surface, form or arrangement that our eyes can linger on. Aderhold's colorful paintings — which merge figuration and abstraction, and display a rich, often quite ambiguous texture and tactility — are surely beautiful to look at, yet most of them speak through a quality that calls from beyond a linen surface stretched onto a frame. They are *aesthetic* not in a common, but rather natural sense of the term.



Detlef Aderhold, *Null Komma Null*, 2011. Acrylic, ink and coffee on canvas, 12 x 12 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

When Hegel presented his "Lectures on Aesthetics" in Berlin between 1820 and 1828, he grounded his subject in "the wide realm of the beautiful," which he restricted to fine art, and understood aesthetic not as a qualitative statement, but as the *science of sensation and feeling*; while art presented the means to portray the human essence, at first in a physical form, and later "a more spiritual form."^[2] In his view, art consequently reveals or embodies ideas — things intangible and abstract by their very nature. Independent from whether one agrees with Hegel or not (not to speak about whether one fully understands him) there is something genuine in both his notions of aesthetic and art, and therefore they closely relate to Aderhold's paintings and artistic practice, because Aderhold's work seeks an encounter that is based on visceral and sensitive understanding — preceding judgment and preconceptions.

The exhibition's title has its origin in a small square painting recalling a fragmented female face. A pair of bright red lips, slightly off-center and enticingly opened to reveal the tips of an upper row of teeth, is joined by a single, dislocated eyeball staring from the upper right of the canvas. There are no lids, not even a hint that could ease the viewer from this constant gaze. However disturbing this impression might be, it is simultaneously calmed (or distracted) by overlapping, translucent patterns that fill the painting's remaining space. Washed out swathes of mint green, soft pink and lemon yellow are joined by cloudlike formations of black and grey. This well-orchestrated visual chaos, of seemingly no end or real beginning except from the boundaries of the canvas, can be understood as a metonym for what Aderhold's work touches upon — affects — and is further emphasized by the work's title. *Null Komma Null* (2011) translates as "zero point zero" and emphasizes Aderhold's conscious decision to deprive his viewers of any linguistic and therefore logical or intellectual point of reference.



Detlef Aderhold, *Makes My Eyes Rain*, 2014. Acrylic and ink on canvas, 35.5 x 43 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

A similar kind of felt, visual noise is present in two other artworks. *City 2* (2008) and *Makes My Eyes Rain* (2014) are large paintings of geometric forms that recall cityscapes, fragmented maps, perhaps even ruins. Even if *Makes My Eyes Rain* is more figurative in its nature, both images depend on and are ultimately held together by their dripping, fluidly colored backgrounds. The layers, stains and marks dissect, highlight and conceal, and thereby allude to a state of precariousness like a fading or incomplete memory, or the residue of a dream. The *Force Take* series (2012) instead confronts the viewer with lines and layers of color deprived of any figurative symbolism or "objective" representation. According to Eric Sutphin, who curated the show, affective states are the unifying conceptual principle in Aderhold's practice, materializing through the formal element of the stain. These stains are often made of coffee or thinned paint, that appears to be acrylic, watercolors and ink — they emerge like diffuse bodies and bubbles, obliterate and allow new (two-dimensional) connections to be drawn, or rather seen. A notion of the psyche resonates within these paintings and ties into Aderhold's background as a psychotherapist.



Detlef Aderhold, *Aufriss*, 2007. Collage and ink on paper mounted on canvas, 59 x 47 inches. Courtesy of the artist.

In fact, *Aufriss* (2007) is a large collage taken from charts, graphs, illustration and notes, each of which originally provided maps of the human mind by documenting studies on how memory changes or is affected by the experience of negative and positive life-changing events. Considering the work's systematic arrangement of numeric and textual sequences, its grid-like structure, as well as its use of information as aesthetic material, *Aufriss* recalls the work of Hanne Darboven. However, this complex drawing fulfills a kind of key function, not only for the show, but also for Aderhold's practice: the signs, numbers and schemes ultimately display not unrelated forms, but affective states that are reduced to or are encoded within indices. The surface then becomes a fragile façade for indiscernible chains of information, for something that is held within, somewhere between the mind and the guts.

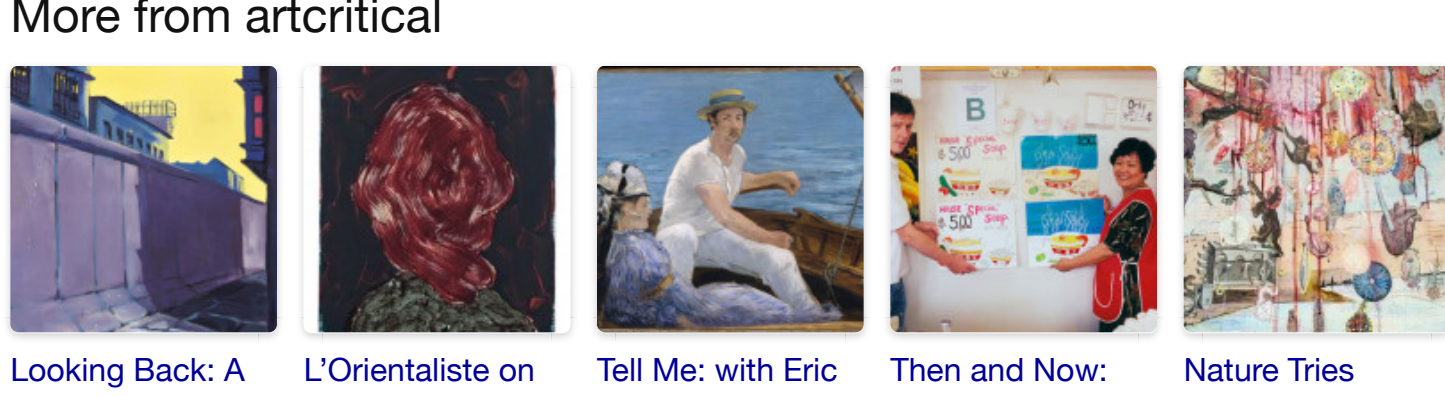
^[1] http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/aesthetic_1

^[2]Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics*, ed. Michael Inwood, trans. Bernard Bosanquet (London: Penguin, 1993), xiv, 3-4.



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Mario Fossetti · 5 years ago
I tend to agree with Will. But then again that's Artcritical for you - I found the review to be as unreadable as most of the pretentious stuff here. Why spend a zillion paragraphs talking about Hegel - just dive into the work.

Noah Dillon → Mario Fossetti · 5 years ago
By "a zillion" paragraphs, do you mean the first half of the first paragraph and the first half of the second paragraph? Because that's the only two places where that stuff is found since it's just a rhetorical frame.

Mario Fossetti → Noah Dillon · 5 years ago
Noah - why are you so committed to "protecting" this one really bad review. I mean, let's be honest, go to Artcritical's Facebook page - Noah needs to align himself with Roberta Smith to get ANY credibility. The review sucked. Most of the crap on Artcritical sucks. Please.

Noah Dillon → Mario Fossetti · 5 years ago
Why to I need to conform to Roberta Smith to get any credibility? I don't understand. Is she the final word on what's what? I also don't understand what the issue with the Facebook page is. It's there to try to attract readers and promote what we publish here. It's not really a main attraction at all. So what's the issue?

I'm the associate editor of the site, in case you missed that. If you don't like the site you don't have to read it. But you also don't have to mischaracterize it with hyperbole and straw men. Most of the stuff on here isn't especially academic and there's very little mention of Hegel in this review. This review just kind of mentions Hegel without really taking that reference anywhere.

So now that I've brought my interest to your attention, do you want to say why you're so committed to shitting on something with really kind of over-the-top insults that don't bear any relation to the thing you're critiquing?

Thanks for reading!
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Will Bradley · 5 years ago
"Hegel is not necessarily the kind of philosopher that comes to my mind when I look at or think about art, nor have I ever heard his arguments used as the subject of a conversation during an exhibition opening."

Do we still require some knowledge on art theory to write about art? I suggest the writer to have more conversations about art until his/her next review.

Noah Dillon → Will Bradley · 5 years ago
What does that mean? Why are you picking on the writer? She's just setting up a frame for her essay and you've turned it into some kind of fisticuffs. No, you don't need knowledge about art theory to write about art. Hegel isn't art theory. There's nothing wrong with incorporating philosophy into a review. You can tell that the author is a her by her name. I suggest you not blow your top imagining what kind of conversations people do or don't get into between now and your next comment.

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