

Don't Worry About the Motion on the Ocean, 2008 (installation view). Photo: Josh White. Courtesy the artist and Honor Fraser, Los Angeles

First impressions are often misleading, which is perhaps why Tillman Kaiser's complex aesthetic is frequently likened to Duchamp, Dada, Constructivism and Surrealism. The Vienna-based artist's painting, sculpture and photos aren't particularly anti-institutional, riddled with Duchampian puns, loaded with social imperative; nor do they illustrate playful non sequiturs. But then, it's often difficult to describe something that is so wholly innovative yet remains so familiar. Kaiser's originality lies in his ability to twist the secular cults of Modernism and science into a kind of double helix, which he uses to build his uncanny images and objects. Kaiser's first solo show in the US features 13 strong works that quietly experiment with science and science fiction, modernity and its aftershocks.

Kaiser's new body of work is pointedly cohesive. While most observable through the work's common, muted pallet of dusty turquoise, pale magenta, black and white (with the occasional sepia, silver and grey), this show is solidly grounded by basic recurring geometries that move through the space. As if Kaiser had developed some systematic modular design, each work relates to the next while remaining distinct and surprising. *What Goes Around, Comes Around* (all works 2008) is a human-size black polyhedron that stands near the centre of the gallery. At the midpoint of each of its eight slats is an inset glass eye that imbues the sculpture with an eerie presence. Nearby, trails of baby-blue eyes are decoratively repeated in the painting *Tapeworm*, a lattice-like composition that resembles the microscopic crystals formed by chemicals. Other works suggest fractal patterns, Art Deco rooftops, space-age furniture, molecules, bacteria and even uranium ore (perhaps factoring into the exhibition's strangely utopian undertone).

Although Kaiser's works have distinct reference points, this source material is rarely consequential and is instead tactfully overshadowed by bold formal statements. *Viele Striche* is an apt example; the focus of the large canvas is a silkscreened rendering of a sculpture by the little-known German artist Dieter Finke, which is mirrored on the canvas, resulting in two dense clusters of vertical lines. The doubled referent is flanked by a series of ashy concentric triangles and pale pink diamonds that recede into the background (while echoing the angles of a nearby sculpture, *Coat*). Painted in egg tempura and accentuated with graphite, the worked ground and the silkscreen seem suspended in a restrained homeostasis. Here Kaiser's appropriated source – the obscure sculpture – becomes symptomatic of a new abstraction. Lying dormant in other works are references to architecture (real or imagined), religious iconography, marine biology and Bob Marley song titles (that are also euphemisms for sex), allusions that are rarely alluded to and seem better left unspoken. And though this is his first solo exhibition outside Austria, one gets the impression that Kaiser is confident in not revealing too much too quickly.

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