



Marina Pinsky

Le Salon, February, 2015

by Laura Herman

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LE SALON

1. Molenbeek Workshop

After her 2014 solo show at CLEARING Gallery, Marina Pinsky (°1986, Moscow) decided to sojourn in Brussels, a place she was immediately drawn to after exhibiting at the gallery in 2013 with Cooper Jacoby. A large apartment in a converted brewery in Molenbeek serves the artist both as a living space and a workshop. In the space between the kitchen and bedroom, the appurtenances of an intensive artistic practice are immediately apparent. I walk around in the room, inspecting resin and plaster sculptures and scanning gallery plans. There aren't many finished works, but the studio definitely offers me some insight into Pinsky's working process. Interestingly, I discern a fascination for craftsmanship, which doesn't really match the preconception of an artist trained as a photographer. Pinsky's artistic practice seems to be underpinned by a willful dedication to test the limits of her alleged MEDIUM by transposing it to other means. Yet the artist's photographs have always permeated sculptural qualities: assembling, layering and manipulating objects, some found and some made by hand, into the pictorial frame. Recent works made for her show at White Columns in 2013, for example, comprised photographs and sculptures building up into a hybrid ensemble of images of clocks and safes, while at the same unraveling the objects' underlying mechanisms. For her solo-show Offset Water Bend or European Death Knot at CLEARING Gallery in 2014 the artist transferred photographs onto recreated cases used for the sale of flags, made of fiberglass and epoxy resin, filled with soil-like substance.





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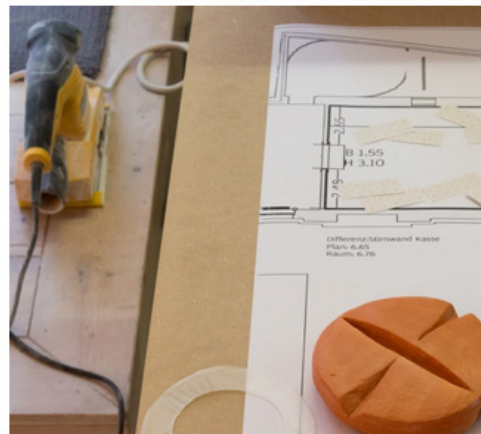
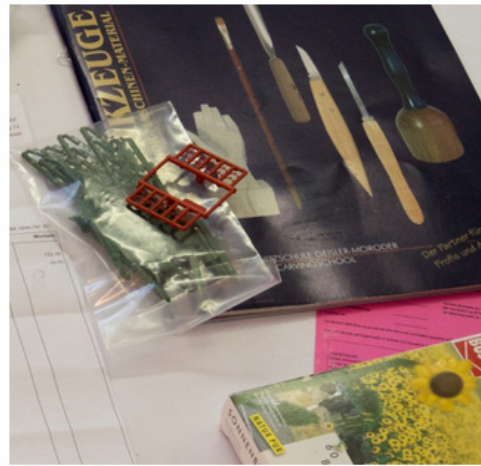
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My visit comes at a time that Pinsky has begun to make a new series of objects for her upcoming show at Kunsthalle Basel in 2016. A closer look reveals that they are oversized pill packaging made out of resin. The idea underlying the series stems from the artist's investigation of the Swiss landscape, home to the pharmaceutical industry, while also referring to Switzerland's economical, psychological and natural topography and the history of medicine. Not bound to just one place, Pinsky draws inspiration from any time, place or culturally encoded object she encounters—impressions she subsequently blends into her work. It's not entirely clear to me, however, how her work adopts space and how it relates to the notion of site-specificity. "Sometimes the disjuncture between the place where the work is made and the place where the work is exhibited is interesting", Pinsky elaborates, "either as an antagonism or as something that's directly connected."

Pinsky's works emanate both simplicity and proficiency, but are obviously time-consuming and complex to produce. The pills are made of clay and the packaging is done by hand in fiberglass and resin, and have been sanded a few times to make them smoother. Pinsky explains the process: "The packaging are made the same way I've made the resin boxes, but those have an image embedded into the resin, and the printing sheet is peeled away. Now I wanted to make things simpler. I love the quality of the fiberglass and the resin in itself." As I listen to Pinsky's practical explanation, I realize that her interest in the materiality of the photographic support draws on a long tradition of artists exploring the physical edges of the photographic frame. It appears as if the artist has reached a point where she boils down her process to its barest essence, investigating how historical and ideological notions can seep through the formal qualities of simple materials, in the process of image making. Rather than documenting the truth or depicting reality, as photography often tends to pursue, Pinsky's resin sculptures capture a different kind of space, imbued with the artist's own observations and understanding of things.

2. CLEARING Gallery

We finish our conversation in the studio and we drive to CLEARING Gallery located on other side of town. On the gallery's first-floor two prints which Pinsky made while studying at the UNIVERSITY of California Los Angeles are hanging on the wall: An untitled work from 2011 and Salt, Sugar, Soda (2011).





CLEARING

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Laura Herman Looking at this image of cast bottles and cigarette packages, I wonder why you felt it necessary to present the objects within the space of a photograph rather than as sculptures.

Marina Pinsky When I first created these objects they weren't proper sculptures, but more like tchotchkes. When I photographed them, somehow they made sense, they became more substantial. The casts needed to be put back into a photograph for me to manipulate the space of the frame.

LH How did you decide upon the objects and how did the layering occur?

MP From looking at an object for a long time and trying to bring out some of its qualities more by changing them around. In Salt, Sugar, Soda you can see the crystalline aspects of all these different things and I wanted to bring out the crystal structure more and more. So, in the background there's a drawing of a crystal cave done in chalk. All these elements - sugar, salt and baking soda - are all crystals themselves.

LH Could you speak a little to why you chose to depict consumer goods produced in the former Soviet Union?

MP I've made pictures before of different Russian products and I was running along that line of thinking. I had used these products before to show contrasting cultural attitudes. More and more I kept abstracting. When I would use American products I would abstract the text so that it wasn't really legible. So, it would go between image and illegible text—a text that just hovers on the verge of becoming an image of text itself.

Pinsky carries up two more ink jet prints from the gallery's basement. She carefully unwraps them and places them against the wall. The pictures originate from the earlier works hanging on the first floor, but the layering seems to have complicated and become brighter over time. Gaussian Blur II (2013) and Security System (2013) are carefully constructed compositions prompting the eye to explore the space of the photograph more fully. The prints depict colorful, cotton fabrics of African design, produced by Vlisco, a Dutch fabric printing company. Similarly to Pinsky's working process, the printing and color dyeing of multiple layers onto the textile is a delicate and tedious affair. No wonder the artist feels drawn to these fabrics. The images in the textile, cans and sprays, re-occur as objects





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in the foreground, as if having caused some kind of a chain reaction, and adding further content to what these things might mean to us. Throughout her work, Pinsky clearly expresses a concern with viewing and how images behave. The overlapping imagery slows down the viewer's gaze, eliciting new ways to consider objects' histories and reasons for existing.

LH I'm curious to know more about the thinking process that motivates the iterations of forms and objects from the background to the foreground of your images. Could you elaborate on that?

MP One thing sets off a chain reaction that sets off another thing that goes into the image. I try to make it all come together in one picture that will gear people to look at it in new ways. With these fabrics, I had them hanging in the studio for a long time. I was thinking about what I could possibly do

for the fabric not just to be a decorative element. I wanted to make something where the meaning of the thing would come forward and started to think about how to bring all the images printed onto the fabric into reality. What could these objects do and how can an image speak to the function or dysfunction of these things?

Perhaps no discipline engenders more difficulties than photography, a medium burdened and fatigued with the duty to permanently reinvent itself. There is something refreshingly liberating in the way Pinsky constructs her images, both within and outside the frame. Rich, yet singular, her images hint at the possibility that, rather than espouse its role as an extension of the eye, photography can function as an appliance to rearrange space and evoke new modes of looking. Pinsky has carved out a space for herself a space of obstinate possibility: the possibility of an art that moves freely beyond medium-specific expectations, and that raises awareness of how things could surely be different than what we assume them to be.

