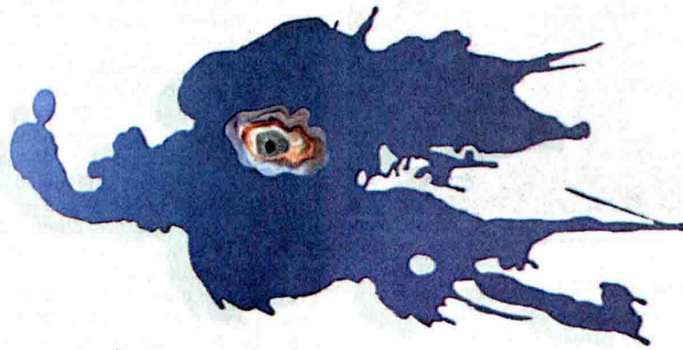


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Art in Review



Lehmann Maupin Gallery

Tony Oursler's "Bluerialisation With Head" (2007) incorporates video.

Tony Oursler

*Lehmann Maupin
540 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through March 24*

Some artists are in love with their materials; others are in perpetual conflict. Tony Oursler's struggle with video is a primary characteristic of his work, and it is interesting to watch him interrogate his medium.

Is video flat or sculptural? Stupid or smart? Tactile? Frigid? Mr. Oursler has entertained all of these possibilities in work ranging from single-channel videos to images of faces and bodies projected onto sculptural surfaces.

Here video is conflated with painting. The monitors are embedded in the surfaces of flat aluminum panels, cut into forms mimicking paint or liquid splatters and painted monochromatically. They screen images of eyes and mouths stretched digitally into amoebalike shapes. Audio accompanying several works is so low that you have to stand close to catch an occasional muttered phrase. In an adjacent room a series of drawings

and collages explores the spectrum in a vague, undirected way.

The important point about the panels is that they reverse the traditional subject-object relationship: painting is no longer a passive recipient of the gaze but instead stares back at and talks to the viewer, expressing rudimentary emotions and desires. Like much of Mr. Oursler's oeuvre, the work is ripe with psychoanalytic references: Freud, Jacques Lacan, D. W. Winnicott, Melanie Klein; the principles of the uncanny, narcissism, mirror stage, object relations and so on.

Rather than unpacking this further, however, Mr. Oursler retreats into discoursing on the spectrum. It's a move that both feels like a non sequitur and underscores his uneasiness with video, as if it were a partner he can never quite trust, or control.

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