

DAN FISCHER

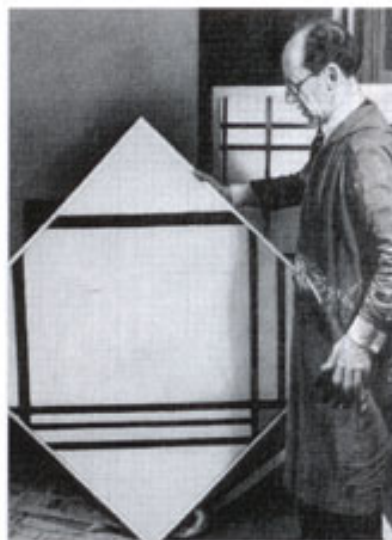
DEREK ELLER GALLERY

Dan Fischer's art of homage and appropriation reveals its maker as both passionate fan and savvy practitioner. Well-known photographs of artists and artworks are the originals for Fischer's detailed graphite-on-paper copies; his recent show included dozens of variations on twentieth-century portraiture, including Cindy Sherman in an untitled film still; Piero Manzoni grinning and holding a can of *Artist's Shit*; Robert Gober nearly unrecognizable in a wedding gown; Piet Mondrian in his tidy smock calmly regarding a grid painting; and Jean-Michel Basquiat sitting on one of his crate constructions. There's also a rendering of *Fountain*, an image so synonymous with Marcel Duchamp that it almost functions as a portrait of the artist. The photos that Fischer copies are often uncredited and rarely artworks in and of themselves; an image of Bridget Riley in stocking feet peering out from between her Op paintings is arresting, but we think of Riley before we think of Lord Snowdon, who actually took the picture.

Fischer achieves ownership of these images through personal, painstaking care and attention. Visible in each is the fine grid used to transfer the image into which he's filled the details as perfectly as possible. "More Love Hours Than Can Ever Be Repaid" (Fischer's second exhibition at this gallery) is also the name of Mike Kelley's pathos-laden 1987 tableau of knitted afghans and stuffed toys. Suggesting the sacrifices involved in artmaking as a practice, the title also nods to Fischer's own dedication of many "love hours" to the project. The overarching narrative of the artist at work thereby links back to Fischer himself as he labors to inscribe his own experience of initiation. For these are images from the art books the artist read and absorbed like a teenager reading fan magazines; Fischer's works reflect not only his own passion but the love affair the art world has with itself.

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Dan Fischer, *Piet Mondrian*, 2003,
graphite on paper, 22 x 15".

Devoted but sophisticated, Fischer understands the implications of what he's doing and who did it before him. His drawing of Chuck Close in the studio making one of his own famously gridded portraits is Fischer's most self-conscious self-reference. And, of course, Sherrie Levine comes to mind whenever appropriation is the formal language spoken. But while the work of Levine, Richard Prince, and others has from the beginning expressed ambivalence, if not aggression, Fischer himself isn't bent on destabilizing the masters (his drawings are much closer to celebrations). Less obvious perhaps is the tension he creates between drawing and photography: With a border of several inches around his images, the works hint at the "look" of photographs. Fischer seems to want to capture the likeness of the artist or artwork even better than the source photo, to outpace photography in its ability to capture not just nuances of light and shadow but perhaps even its claim to representational truth.

—Meghan Dailey