

Michal Budny

Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen

BY NOEMI SMOLIK



Michal Budny, *Between*, 2011,
Installation view

Michal Budny's show was ambivalent, leaving the viewer torn between two possibilities: Was this a minimalist exhibition with a subtle poetic undertone, wonderfully tailored to the space of the Kunstverein, or was it a reconstruction, bordering on kitsch, of something formerly upheld as Minimalist? Surprising as it may first seem, the answer was both.

The Warsaw-based artist made clever use of the elongated space with its natural overhead light. On entering, one was immediately struck by three pale green curtains carefully spread out side by side on the floor to form a picture (all works *Untitled*, 2011). Years of exposure to light had bleached out individual folds, covering the surfaces with a fine painting, worthy of the early Ad Reinhardt.

On one of the long walls, transparent adhesive tape had been used to draw a large square. Vertical strip by vertical strip, the shape had been filled in with meticulous care. Only the top ends appeared to have been torn

off, forming a frayed, slightly shabby-looking line. A transparent sheet lay approximately in the middle of the space on the floor. The light reflected in this sheet created the impression of an expanse of water. There was also a waxed tablecloth stretched like a canvas at the top end of the room. And at first glance, that seemed to be all.

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But only at first glance. For below the ceiling, a length of string was stretched across the space. One of the concrete beams on the ceiling was painted a shade of pale pink which corresponded to the pale curtains on the floor. Moreover, the paint was applied so delicately that it took another glance to even notice it. One skylight □ covered with transparent material, which slightly diffused the light entering that section of the room □ was also hardly noticeable. And without a hint one would have likely overlooked the irregular black baseboard drawn onto one of the short walls. Perhaps this exhibition was less about the works themselves and more about evoking a feeling of uncertainty which sharpens the eye □ for light and shadow, for presence and absence, for elegance and shabbiness, for art and non-art.

□ Between □ was the title of the show, which was especially created for the space in Dusseldorf. This title could be understood as a wedge inserted by Budny between Minimalism □'s claim to pure form and the form itself. Does the kind of pure form aspired to by the Minimalists exist at all? Budny □'s forms were poetically open and minimalistically austere at the same time. As a result, the artist paradoxically subverted any claim to purity and showed what is inherent in every form: ambivalence.

Translated by Nicholas Grindell

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