

Chris Bond

Vogue Hommes, September 1986, Mirror

Taking it all away, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2014-15

Artist Statement

I can't remember when I first met Christian Capurro, or when I heard about his erased magazine, *Another Misspent Portrait of Etienne de Silhouette*. It feels like forever, but it must have been sometime in the early 2000s, probably at about the time I was undertaking a studio residency at 200 Gertrude Street. The timing is important, as I've attempted to make my response to his work using thinking, materials and techniques common to my practice at that time.

In terms of methodology, it fits with my current interest in what I call fictional play, an invented term that describes the performing of fictional variations of self-identity through the use of role-playing, pseudonym, identity simulation and self-deception. Previously, I've used it as a technique to side-step self-conditioned responses to ideas, materials, and forms, inhabiting the bodies and minds of invented artists and writers to generate new form. Here, however, I've used it to try to step back into an earlier version of myself.

In the early 2000s I used one material above all others- artists' linen, either in its raw state for sculptural work, or coated with rabbit skin glue to make a surface for painting. For me it represented tradition and the void, a mid-toned ground that bridged my interest in conventional materials and the allure of nothingness.

I made a lot of work at that time that was reactionary and oppositional. I painted ravens from bird watching manuals in negative so that they looked like white doves, turned stretcher bars into linen-clad memorials to Greenbergian Formalism, painted replicas of 1970s paperback book covers with all the text removed, exhibited landscape paintings at artist run spaces, wrote essays of postmodern gibberish, and was generally a pain.

So my response to Christian's work feels right. It's an exact replica of the original magazine in its freshest state, before it accumulated wear and tear by handling (and erasure), but made entirely in reverse. The spine is on the opposite side, and all the imagery and text is mirror-reversed.

The mirroring turns the vague comprehensibility of the French text of the source magazine into something less comprehensible. As a result it becomes somewhat less useful, though it still retains the formal components that make it interesting as an object. Nothing is gained here. It takes a turn away from the erased magazine, which instead gains something through the process of it being worked upon. Importantly, the hours of labour involved in attending to the painted detail forms a conceptual bridge to the toil involved in the erasure of text in Christian's work. Both are equally absurd endeavours.

The innards are made entirely of rabbit skin glue coated linen, as is the cover. The process of painting directly onto the rabbit skin glue coated linen surface without a white primer results in a

painting that has a strange flatness, a technique I abandoned a decade ago, but have returned to here.