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Adam Krueger *Audience*, 2009. Oil on canvas mounted to PVC plastic, stuffed monkeys, canvas, rubber bands. Courtesy: Coleman Burke Gallery, New York

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Adam Krueger
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By **Megan Marie Garwood**

Adam Krueger's solo exhibition *Untitled (saran wrap painting)* comprised of some eighteen works that manipulate traditional painting and installation techniques, offers its own surprises.

Though ethereal in exhibition, the layers of Krueger's creation process (cutouts of paintings fixed directly to the wall) result in the viewer's inherent attraction to and bemusement by these works. Krueger's deliberate ambiguity challenges the viewer to fill the "voids". Ergo, his work plays with negative space in such a way that disrupts a seemingly-fluid painting.

The wall piece *Fly in Ointment* shows this effect well. Cut into numerous pieces, the oil painting (adhered to PVC plastic before the wall) presents a hyper-realistic woman adorned with useless hair curlers (she is bald) taped to her head stacking imaginary cups, which rise from the negative space of the wall. The white void, now filled with a castle of precariously stacked cups, conceals most of her body, but through several separated, floating pieces as the viewer glimpses her striped socks, folded stomach, a shadow cast down her shoulder and the illuminated contours of her breasts. As she attempts to set another cup, she seems to shield her face from the viewer's gaze, as if captured in an awkward moment. She is a puzzle for the viewer to assemble mentally.

The dichotomy of Krueger's esoteric execution style, a layering of fastidious planning and completion, can be confusing. Initially, his work begins with a set idea grounded in photography. After a myriad of photographs taken, he chooses one that embodies that something. Working with a computer design program, he amalgamates graphic art with realistic painting by using the photograph as the subject of his canvas work. He sketches the complete image onto a canvas and then paints in manner that references Italian Renaissance ideals of naturalistic portraits. His surface dries evenly, thinly and precisely, without a trace of the artist's hand.

Krueger follows the photographs so closely that these life-like paintings become blurry in parts, just as in photography. For example, the contours of the wall work *Audience*, featuring only a teal skirt pulled taut by anonymous hands, dissolve into the white wall while a troupe of three masked monkeys mock the one-legged figure.

Adam Krueger *Punctured*, 2008 (opposite page)
Oil on canvas mounted to pvc plastic, body hair, string.
30 x 24 inches

All I want for..., 2009 (this page)
Oil on canvas mounted to plywood, painted christmas lights.
52 x 22 x 10 inches

Courtesy: Coleman Burke Gallery, New York

Brazenly, he cuts the canvas discarding certain sections and thereby destroying months of work. While installing, he positions the cut canvas to a new surface and fabricates a site-specific composition. Though distorted, the painting still reveals Krueger's concept. The finished painting, held together by imaginary space, leaves the viewer in wonder what has been excluded, as much as to contemplate what remains.

To be sure, other artists who have invited us into their self-consciousness (such as Tracey Emin had more-abrasively welcomed us into her bed), Krueger's works demand interaction from the viewer. Cut pieces of his canvas are applied to

"cut outs" depicting life-size human figures with removed faces that resemble carnival-like wooden displays in which identity is hidden. The most approachable works in the show prove to be the most unmaning.





Adam Krueger *Fly in Ointment*, 2008
Oil on canvas mounted to pvc plastic. 36 x 48 inches

[Page 22] *In Show*, 2009
Oil on canvas mounted to plywood. 69 x 32 x 10 inches

[Page 23] *Original Premium*, 2009
Oil on canvas mounted to pvc plastic. 96 x 72 inches

Courtesy: Coleman Burke Gallery, New York

For example, the green-hued cut-out, *In Show*, immediately gets attention due to its sheer size and remarkably-detailed naturalistic portrayal of its subject. Standing in contrapospita pose, a woman is depicted like an Olympian contestant waiting to be judged.

A timid minimalistic cut-out of a waif-like ballerina, *All I Want For...*, nudges the viewer to ask, What does she want? What do I want? Depicted nearly pure white and "trimmed" with a single thread of Christmas lights, she is nearly missed by the crowd, even though her hand is raised in an attempt to waive down attention. Krueger delineates her right breast and protruding rib, along with a few strands of her hair with soft strokes of purple oil paint; the seemingly delicate ballerina allows the viewer to project one's own desires and inner-thoughts onto her.



Each work in the exhibition is very different from the next, as if each were a unique entry from the artist's personal journal conveying scattered emotive reactions to daily encounters.

This incongruity of works is actually what strings the series together; the chaotic array of displaced and disfigured works mimics one's

own ephemeral and sometimes forgotten reflections. In the wall painting, *Punctured*, a waning balloon collecting a pile of string as it falls casts a shadow on the wall with neatly-applied human hair.

While human form is the predominate motif in these works, Krueger neither outwardly critiques



nor celebrates the subjects. A separate space in the gallery, painted black, is dedicated to the wall work *Original Premium*. A haunting gray image of a man's portrait comprises most of this composition. The "original premium" product appears to be the man himself and not the faint crackers seen in the background. **M**

Ed. Note:
Coleman Burke Gallery is located in Chelsea at 638 West 28 St., Ground Floor, between 11 h & 12 h Avenues, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 917.677.7825