

**BRIAN O'CONNELL /
House Beautiful**

We are delighted to mark the opening of our new gallery rooms in Berlin with our fourth exhibition of works from the American artist Brian O'Connell.

Brian O'Connell is fascinated by the structures and comparisons that result from a purely formal juxtaposition of objects that have been taken from widely divergent contexts. In his exhibitions, O'Connell employs apparently erroneous and absurd matches to explore the potential for such relationships in historical and political contexts, as a means to an end. His constructions represent the possibilities of rhetoric, and translate them into a visual language of competing forms, formalisms and utopias. In the 1950s, Hermann Henselmann planned the Strausberger Platz according to the architectural tenets of Socialist Realism. Brian O'Connell is now presenting two work groups in these surroundings - House Beautiful and Nomadic Morris. House Beautiful is comprised of a sculpture and a series of photograms which reference Mondrian's quadratic compositions. It is possible to reconstruct a Robert Morris work from the countless cardboard models which constitute the "Nomadic Morris Template" sculpture. The work is a reference to the book "Nomadic Furniture", which was published by James Hennessy and Victor in 1973. Thus, the New York artist O'Connell has chosen "House Beautiful" for the exhibition title. The heading is derived from one of the most popular domestic-design magazines in America. At the height of the McCarthy era in 1953, the magazine published an article under the title "Threat to the Next America", in which it was argued that the prevailing international style of design and architecture was part of the communist conspiracy. Using the Farnsworth House from Mies van der Rohe as an example, the magazine's chief editor Elisabeth Gordon made a list of the offending style's characteristic features:

Flat roofs
Smooth surfaces
Walls that look like Mondrian compositions
Cubist structures on stilts
Favouring of stark black and white, although occasional use of 2 or 3 primary colours
Abhorrence of ornamentation and decoration
Elimination of partition walls, so that a house tends to be one public room with open areas for sleeping, eating, playing, etc.
Maximum use of glass without any corrective devices for shade or privacy
Disregard for site and climate, whether in the desert or in a city, with few or no protective measures against sun, heat, cold, and rain. Emphasis on collective, block-house apartments, built according to the above characteristics

Brian O'Connell's concept, and the resulting interconnection of form and content, pervades the entire exhibition, creating complex formal and associative connotations. Hence, his art is a vehicle for enhancing the perception of form and for encouraging reflection on content.

The exhibition will be opened at 6 pm on Friday 22nd June.

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