

LOS ANGELES

Seb Patane

CHINA ART OBJECTS

At the heart of Seb Patane's tight, studied exhibition is its namesake, a hypnotic video titled *Year of the Corn*, 2011. The time-based composition has a trancelike, vaguely tribal sound component and sets into action the many static expressions visible in the artist's drawings, paintings, collages, prints, and sculptures elsewhere in the room. Over the course of six minutes, the piece shifts through five distinct movements: a dark silhouette (a head? a landscape?) floating static against a pixelated red sky; two planes of latticework spinning laterally; a strangely ritualistic performance shot in black and white played forward and back; two masked bodies superimposed against a bamboo forest; and a point-of-view tracking shot retreating from a deserted shack. In this final section, a muffled voice can faintly be heard reading a poem written by the artist; a text pasted to a wall adjacent to the projection echoing the voice-over, "We were faithful to the line; faithful, to the straight line. . . ."

The structure of this video is peculiar in that while it is both nonnarrative and looped, it is also clearly linear, its successive patterning moving steadily from scene A, to B, to C, and so on, before ultimately returning to A and starting again while lyrically unfolding indeterminately outward. Such opposition between a line and a loop proves to be an unpretentious formal device, which Patane extended to the other works in this show. For example, in *Eleventh to the North*, 2011, similar formal dualisms are sculpturally and pictorially addressed. Leaning a ten-foot-long unprimed canvas against the wall, Patane then dropped before it a pile of thin wooden poles marked with bands of colored tape; four more poles lean against the canvas, reiterating and buttressing the dominant works rendered in acrylic on the flat surface. In between these two- and three-dimensional lines, the work is further embellished with an explosion of tiny geometries, organic patterns of ballpoint pen, and symbols and fragmented text drawn in colored pencil.



Seb Patane, *Eleventh to the North*, 2011, acrylic, ballpoint pen, and colored pencil on canvas, wood, and tape, 90 x 120".

Patane easily shifts between painting and sculpture, conflating pictorial space with physical presence and addressing an object as he might regard a painting. In *Helmetbretic Telepathical*, 2011, a large free-standing wooden structure installed in the gallery's main space, Patane seems to question where the "face" of both a sculpture and painting might be. Oriented toward a back wall, the sculpture revealed a small artwork secured by its open-frame structure: an abstract painting collaged with printed paper and leather and set behind glass. The orientation of this flat work was frontal in relation to its sculptural superstructure, but the sculpture seemed backward, with the reverse of the painting's frame facing the entryway. Thus, the viewer was forced to perambulate the sculpture to view the front of both pieces.

In what might be taken as a parallel gesture, when Patane turns toward the figurative—whether in collages that incorporate found photos or in prints that purport to be self-portraits—he nearly always obscures the face of his subject. Even the short clip used in his video—lifted from Peter Sykes's 1968 cult film *The Committee*—depicts a man wearing an elaborate headdress that covers much of his face. These instances of the artist literally defacing a body, while reading as easy attempts at the erasure of identity, are yet another move in the gamelike systems that the artist contrives. And how the viewer figures into these riddles may actually be where we locate the face value of Patane's not-so-faithfully "straight" meanings.

—Catherine Taft