

## reviews

## california

painted areas of intense oranges, reds, and pinks; absorbent red fake fur. There is something cheap and glamorous in the choice of materials. On one panel a provocative circle of red fake fur rested in the center of a flesh-colored foam square. There are times when I wish that art could jump off the wall and slap the viewer out of complacency. Enigmatic and difficult to pin down, this installation pushed buttons to achieve that. Informed by the sensibilities of painting, "Wish You Were Here" 2000" went beyond painting in use of both materials and space. Like a good book, this installation was a slow read that became more engaging with each page.

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Merijn Bolink

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"Simple" is the descriptive term for a mode of living that extends to a philosophical stance. Simplicity has great attraction these days for an informed portion of the world population. It is donned like a coat of armor for protection, but as a defense mechanism it makes about as much sense as Don Quixote tilting at windmills. The load of information dumped via a variety of connections into the space of most everyone's

every day is immense and ever enlarging, and precludes any actual austerity. Still, there is a prevailing perception (not without merit) that less of everything, from furniture to ingredients in a recipe, places one in a lighter, healthier, and more mobile position for coping with an onslaught of stuff from quarters over which there is little control. If you can look away from a swarm of spam cluttering your e-mail inbox to a Spartan room, then at least a moment of visual relief has been achieved.

Merijn Bolink is a Dutch sculptor who has adopted the essentials of this ideology and uses them as a guide toward a conceptually pared-down approach to art making. He takes things apart and reconstructs them as enigmatic yet exegetic configurations. In *Untitled (labrador)* from 1995, a stuffed female dog is followed by a bevy of small plastic dogs—at first glance the host of little ones appears to be puppies, but close inspection reveals each to be a dog-shaped replica of the large dog's internal organs. *Untitled (labrador)* is a model of Bolink's belief in revelation of the inside of a thing as a means to understand the thing or situation. A simple idea? Yes. Is the work simplistic? No.

Bolink, a self-professed fan of Lawrence Weiner, has moved aside from signs (or language) to the dissection and altered rebuilding of individual objects. He sees this as a way to instruct and involve the viewer in an idiosyncratic process of constructing meaning. But Bolink aims for a warm, body-involved rejoinder—thus the retreat from the language-based systems that Weiner used toward establishing a one-to-one relationship with a singular object. To ensure that this was the case with this exhibition, Bolink

produced a custom-fit construction. *Celluloid Lust* is a life-size female figure that looks a lot like a character in the 1980s futuristic flick *Blade Runner*. The sculpture, except for its black patent leather shoes, is constructed of pieces of stock film taken from a 1970s Dutch porn movie. The nude body is seated on a stool and internally lit, allowing a frame by frame inspection of the form. This pop culture icon also addresses another aspect of Bolink's ideology: his is at base a pop oeuvre, rather than academic or elitist. He aims to appeal to the people.

Yet Bolink does not avoid savvy dissections and referrals to art traditions. *Untitled (Cake Table)* from 1997 features an antique table under a spot light covered with cake-making materials. The reference to seventeenth-century Dutch still-life paintings of sumptuously stocked kitchens and larders is unmistakable. But Bolink works a little accessible magic with this subject as well: the shadow of each of the items on the table is made of the material of that item (the shadow of the plastic measuring cup is plastic, the sifter's is made of metal mesh, etc.). Bolink is consumed with expressing the elemental components that make up larger scenarios. It is a straightforward, even simple exploration aimed at unraveling certain mysteries while (almost inadvertently) spawning others. He uses the common adage "take a thing apart to understand it," but the uncommon forms that result from his esoteric recombinations provide astounding views.

*Charlene Roth is an artist, writer, and curator living in Los Angeles.*



Merijn Bolink

*Celluloid Lust*, 2000. Cellulose acetate (from *Blue Movie*, 1971), 67 3/4" x 43 1/3" x 59". Courtesy of Post.