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Dan Rees at Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin

French Cricket

11 September – 23 October 2010

Preview:

Friday, 10 September, 6–9pm

Kurfürstenstraße 156
10785 Berlin

www.tanyaleighton.com

Tanya Leighton Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of new works by Dan Rees. This is his first solo exhibition at the gallery.

"Keep your art soft and sweet. You might have to eat it." Inscribed in white cursive letters on a bright blue cake, the words from this 2005 piece encapsulate the spirit behind much of Dan Rees's young, yet prolific, production. Filled with references to Conceptual art practices—Daniel Buren's legendary stripes that sloppily spill over onto the wall behind badly painted copies ("Two Stripey Paintings," 2009) or analog media like slide and 16 mm film projections and B&W documentary photography, as in the 2006 series, "Black and White Things in Black and White,"—his work is accessible to a public specialized in rooting out its numerous art historical references and citations. And yet the impulse behind such an exercise is a far more humbling (and ultimately ambitious) process of shifting through the muddle of what has been handed down to a young artist to eventually make something of one's own: in this case, something funny, and gently irreverent, and earnest.

With his most recent work, Rees aspires to a move away from the hermeticism and elitism of the art world, with a return to the real world with its popular cultural references—well-attired '80s football Casuals or cricketer David Gower's unruly hair to name a few—and messy, dirty materials like plasticine or the artex plaster that adorns his grandmother's ceiling in Wales and thousands of other working class interiors across the UK. The protagonist of the current exhibition is a frog

named Charles, an erudite dandy who engages in posh and leisurely activities like playing cricket (badly of course, because he is French) and reading poetry, although he is eternally frustrated by a longing to fulfill his creative potential, trapped as he is by intellectual detachment and the physical constraints of the tiny monitor that contains his digitally constructed image. Nearby a disembodied clay head spins around on a turntable perched atop a homemade totem pole—a vernacular art for m legible to even the most unaccustomed contemporary art viewer—in a vertiginous movement Rees describes as a feeling of freedom "between what you believe in and what you are forced to accept, between your ideas and dreams and the dead forms and phantoms." It's like killing your idols but doing it softly.