

of the pigments, which Uslé mixes himself, are very much the point, and he manipulates them with little regard for describing environment; instead, he uses color to conjure form. Uslé sometimes extends these forms to the physical edges of the supports, as in the dense ribbons and underlying architecture of *Nudo Abierto* (Open Knot) and *Urban S*, both 2013, or the stepped, Op-wallpaper-like covering of *Nemo Encerrado* (Nemo Surrounded), 2012–13, producing a tension that belies the painting's actual size. In other cases, as with *Las Bidas* (The Bridles) and *Ageda's dream*, both 2013, passages are held apart from one another, like items on the page of a sketchbook that bear only uncanny associations when thought together. Such evident pleasures in composition attest to the intimacy of the material exercise that constitutes Uslé's project, in which contingencies inherent to making and determinants related to geography survive intact.

—Suzanne Hudson

William Powhida

CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY

In recent years, Brooklyn-based artist William Powhida has garnered a reputation as a gadfly caricaturist with his drawings that diagram, in paranoiac detail, the art world as a socially, politically, and economically dysfunctional system. In November 2009, his drawing *How the New Museum Committed Suicide with Banality*, commissioned for the cover of the *Brooklyn Rail*, galvanized critical consciousness around “Skin Fruit,” the New Museum's show of selections from the collection of Dakis Joannou (a trustee of the institution) curated by Jeff Koons. Powhida is as beloved by the snarky art blogosphere as he is by the figures whose self-importance is confirmed when they find themselves lampooned in his works. Joannou himself reportedly bought an editioned print of the New Museum drawing, and Jerry Saltz once wrote under the headline “William Powhida Is Making Fun of Me, and I Love It.” Powhida's practice has also extended beyond these scathing cartoons to include an experimental classroom that operated out of New York's Winkelman Gallery (which he orchestrated with collaborator Jennifer Dalton) and performative gestures that star the brash, mononymed alter-ego Powhida, played by hired actors.

Powhida's second solo exhibition at Charlie James Gallery in Los Angeles, titled “Bill by Bill,” comprised paintings and sculptures that also took the form of caricature, for the artist designed and hired out for fabrication a range of objects that mimic what he deems to be the most prevalent tropes of market-ready contemporary art. There were digitally produced Color Field paintings, ceramic objects arranged on

a shelf, hard-edge abstractions, neo-expressionist figuration, text in neon, taxidermy, Big Shiny Things. Accompanying each work was a drawing of a notebook page documenting the work's cynical conceptualization and the cost of the object's production.

In Powhida's *A Neo-Modernism* (all works 2013), black Plexiglas panels inserted into found stretcher bars weakly resuscitate Ellsworth Kelly's shapes and Constructivism's truth to materials. This piece, along with several others in the show, nods to the pseudonymous David Geers's “Neo-Modern” essay published in *October* last year, which argues that current revivals of twentieth-century modernist and Minimalist aesthetics mark a twenty-first-century *rappel à l'ordre*. *Some Shiny Objects*, nested pentagons made of drywall studs that stand doubled on a mirror, lamely evoke Judd and Smithson while capitalizing on the popularity of all things shiny, from Jeff Koons to Jacob Kassay; *A Taxonomy of Objects on a Shelf*, a series of basic, geometric ceramic shapes arranged on an IKEA shelf, channels Haim Steinbach by way of James Lee Byars to dig at the proliferation of display-culture aesthetics from Carol Bove to Rashid Johnson. The most successful of Powhida's objects rise above mere caricature by being encoded with sociopolitical data. *A Post Minimalism*, for instance, translates a bar graph of the perceived, preferred, and actual distributions of US wealth into a trio of Anne Truitt-esque columns. Three digitally printed abstract canvases, *Some Asset Class (Digital) Paintings—Color Fields*, borrow their print-and-stretch technique from Wade Guyton, but their proportion and coloring derive from banknotes.

As much as one might want to defend the integrity of Powhida's practice, it must be admitted that his objects fail to deliver the critical potential in his conceit. In their particularly perfunctory nature as hackneyed exercises, these works ironically risk reinforcing a belief in the modernist credo, à la Michael Fried, that successful artworks must “compel conviction” in their form. Aside from the drawings, Powhida's parodies lack any conviction, and thereby provide negative proof that there *is* a difference—however slight, magical, projected, or elusive—between an artwork and an object constructed to look like one. This show's neo-modernist dummies are part of the artist's multifront strategy of institutional critique; however, in comparison to his experiments in radical pedagogy, which attempt to offer escape routes from or alternatives to the formulaic aspects of the art world, Powhida's flat-footed decoys prove to be a weak link.

—Natilee Harren

BRISTOL, UK/LONDON

Jutta Koether

ARNOLFINI/CAMPOLI PRESTI

“Seasons and Sacraments,” Jutta Koether's first large-scale show in the UK, presented at the Arnolfini, brought together three groups of work inspired by Nicolas Poussin: *Embrace*, 2012, a freestanding, three-part canvas created for the 2012 São Paulo Bienal that mimics a work attributed to the French painter in the collection of the Museu de Arte de São Paulo; *The Seasons*, 2012, a four-part painting originally shown at the 2012 Whitney Biennial; and *The Seven Sacraments*, 2012–13, an ambitious new group encompassing painting, sculpture, and video. Several additional works interlinked these Poussin-related pieces: *Penance (Bristol)*, 2013, a Lucite-table-and-liquid-acrylic sculpture created specifically for this staging of the exhibition, which constituted the second leg of a two-venue tour (“Seasons and Sacraments” was first shown at Dundee Contemporary Arts in Dundee, Scotland); a video montage, *Untitled*, 2013, that includes footage of the performative aspect of the



View of “William Powhida,” 2013.