

GOOD TASTE: The Works of Dan Bruinooge

Curatorial Statement by Gerald Martindill

Good Taste surveys a selection of Dan Bruinooge's paintings and sculptures over the span of 10 years. These works were initially chosen for their formal qualities; their sense of balance, harmony, simplicity, and truth to material. Within his subdued surfaces lie deep truths. At once obscured and entirely lucid, Bruinooge uses abstraction and photorealism to express an aesthetic politic. His form is moral, his tone full of gravitas. Communicated within this exhibition, an ideology is at play.

Bruinooge implores the viewer to go back-to-basics. In *Self-Portrait*, he wears unassuming, conservative clothes one would wear to work or church. There is no posturing; His ego is at bay. He sits before a paper-towel ready to be in service of the work. With painstaking precision and care, Bruinooge intimates a commitment to something greater.

In a gesture of democracy, Bruinooge chose to safeguard a paper towel 10 years ago. It rests within a humble frame; stained, worn, and unassuming. The material acts as a container for America; for its suburbs and half-realized dreams. There is a hushed tone for what never truly was, but still could be... a great society. The depressions suggest rippling flags and the American project, as well as the lineages of abstraction. Like the experiments of Malevich and Albers, his squares within squares have the potential for transcendence, wholeness, pure feeling.

Alicia Laughing depicts a moment between Bruinooge and an elderly neighbor in her small, cluttered apartment. She laughs while telling stories, however her head is bowed, face covered; she looks dejected; the mood melancholy. Like Jean-François Millet's subjects, she is plain and common, real and understands struggle. She has a quiet fortitude that is appealing. Her simple garment and obscured face mirror Bruinooge's *Self Portrait*, posing questions of individuality, commonality, and erasure.

Bruinooge builds upon these themes by resurrecting a discarded painting he found in the world. Signed and dated "Diana 1946", he decides to collaborate with her - a stranger from the past - whom he never knew... never will. Alone in his studio, with empathy, consideration, and a spirit of collective understanding, they make something together.

In Bruinooge's most heroic gesture of abstraction, he made *Dark Painting*. Assertive in its obscurity — handsome even — a smokey black color field is framed by purple umber. With presence and power, Bruinooge is full of thought and feeling he has no intention of revealing. His palette offers a shield from sparkling, saturated imagery which attempts to entertain, manipulate, and anesthetize. Seriousness in the face of frivolity.

Through this exhibition, we hope to showcase a simple, honest, and well-meaning aesthetic. "Good taste", we joked half-seriously. We hope this can be felt through the work. As Bruinooge puts it:

I want my work to be beautiful, for it to be tasteful, whether it's a portrait or a paper towel. Taste and aesthetics can get to the root of things immediately, words and metaphors are often slower. Taste can be a shorthand for understanding one's ideas, one's feelings, their views on politics, spirituality, philosophy, etc. Good taste takes attention to detail but also a step back to see how a piece works as a whole, and how it exists in the world. Good taste is both formal and conceptual. Good taste is dignifying.