

# HEIDI WOOD

## **HEIDI WOOD, Los Angeles**

Galerie Anne Barrault, Paris

September 10 - October 22 2005

During a residency in Los Angeles, Heidi Wood found herself confronted with a stream of advertising images within the urban environment and industrialized entertainment characteristic of the megalopolis. Based on this experience, she continued to develop a practice grounded in an analysis of market forces applied to artworks. The exhibition at the Galerie Anne Barrault offers us a sample.

As far back as 2001, Heidi Wood created domestic environments into which she integrated her paintings. The image thus produced was reminiscent of contemporary furniture catalogues with the paintings presented as objects for sale. The photographic series "Los Angeles" presented at the Galerie Anne Barrault also uses this principle, but this time the environment is not artificial. The operational mode is that of insertion.

In the photographs of urban landscapes of the American megalopolis, Heidi Wood montages fictional paintings over billboards. The paintings pick up on the esthetic of logos that the city is saturated with, whilst introducing visual blanks due to their purely abstract nature. Inside the image of the urban landscape, the abundance of advertising messages is thus undermined on a visual level. Within the space of the artwork, the arbitrary addition to the photographs of advertising slogans taken from TV ads highlights deconstruction at another level; that of their meanings. Texts and images cohabit without dialoguing in a pure and apparently gratuitous visual space.

This utopia of a public space given over to art is soon swept away by the reality of the support chosen: the billboard. In line with the parasitical character of advertising, the photographs in the current exhibition are the size of a flyer. In 2004, in Los Angeles, they were even sent out as spams. In this way, the artwork enters the commercial system via promotion. Yet what the images from the "Los Angeles" series are promoting is completely virtual. The paintings do not, in fact, exist, unlike those of her preceding series. From this dematerialization, however, a declension of forms develops, and this time they take on a physical existence. The virtual artwork, demoted to the status of nuisance by the promotional system, becomes object once again thanks to an interpretation borrowed from the applied arts. The exhibition becomes a showroom.

The fictional paintings inserted in the photographs are conjugated as wallpapers on the three walls at the back of the gallery. The visual signs thus become decorative motifs, either unique or repeated. The production of these wallpapers using A4 photocopies placed side by side, while stressing the serial nature of cheap wallpapers, takes the appropriation of industrial production methods to its logical conclusion. Using procedures borrowed from industry, Heidi Wood's art applies itself methodically to objects produced by the commercial system.

And when she hangs a series of six paintings entitled "California Dreaming", there is no question of nostalgia or revival, in returning to what tradition holds as the noble art of painting. The stretched canvas is none other than upholstery fabric whose texture is readable under the paint. Almost redundant, the painting reproduces the logos invented by the artist, with purely decorative intent. The texts that accompany them function in the same way as those in the "Los Angeles" series, i.e. they do not dialogue with the image. Anecdotes collected by Heidi Wood during her stay in the Californian megalopolis, these brief tales serve as embellishments, as befitting decoration. Ephemeral and pleasant.

To complete this system of production and distribution, Heidi Wood cheerfully reveals her plan to publish a mail-order catalogue based on a sample of what is offered in this exhibition-showroom. It will soon be possible to choose a motif among those created, as well as the color and the medium (wallpaper, painting, etc.). Although she models the art world on the free market economy, she nonetheless retains a critical distance, as indicated by a megalomaniacal gesture in a small photograph at the back of the gallery. In this image, "Heidi" ironically replaces the "Holly" of the Hollywood sign. "Heidiwood" is an industrial art microsystem. The undertaking as a whole mercilessly questions the value and survival of art in the neo-Liberal era.

**Perin-Emel Yavuz**, September 2005

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Translated from French

