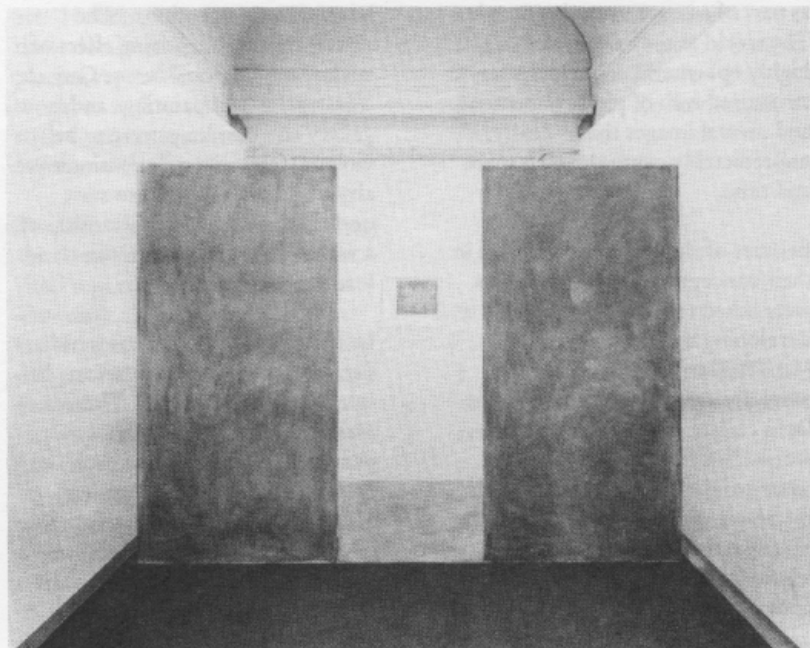


Ernst Caramelle
MATRIX/BERKELEY 145

University Art Museum
early July - mid September 1991



Ernst Caramelle's exhibition is always to some degree site-specific. As he has chosen to do in the MATRIX Gallery, Caramelle frequently creates an exhibition almost exclusively from thin-walled, white color and pigment panels into the existing gallery walls. Colorful and geometric, these wall-paintings may first appear to be simple abstract designs, but they soon reveal themselves to be illustrative representations of an extended architectural space. We

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"All invisible things adhere to the visible, the audible to the inaudible, the tactile to the nontactile. And perhaps the thinkable to the unthinkable."

—Novalis

Ernst Caramelle and Tim Maul share an interest in the intersection of perception and imagination. Their work suggests that even the simplest awareness of our immediate surroundings exists only as part of a larger, complex puzzle. The world as they describe it is a highly ephemeral, miraculously structured web of physical matter and mental images that is neatly, if unpredictably, spun through space and time.

Because of the common elements in their conception, these two artists were asked to work together in developing their concurrent MATRIX exhibitions. The mutually agreed upon end result is less a collaboration than, in their words, "an overlap." True to the nature of their respective aesthetics, they have decided to develop an elusive rather than an overt relationship between their two bodies of work.

Ernst Caramelle's exhibitions are always to some degree site-specific. As he has chosen to do in the MATRIX Gallery, Caramelle frequently creates an exhibition almost exclusively from thin washes of watercolor and pigment painted onto the existing gallery walls. Colorful and geometric, these wall-paintings may first appear to be simply abstract designs, but they soon reveal themselves to be illusionistic representations of an extended architectural space. We

may see rooms leading into rooms or walls broken only by opaque rectangles suggesting windows or the "missing" works of art.

In this exhibition, as in several earlier pieces, Caramelle has created alignments between a near and a far wall so that, when viewed from a certain angle, the three-dimensional space of the actual gallery appears to be flat. Thus, with sensuousness and wit, Caramelle brings us to the edge of our perception. "The disturbing and surprising effect of such manipulation," wrote Guy Tosatto, "is as if paintings and gallery surroundings were to be violently cast into a dimensionless abyss and one is forced to start questioning the true relationship of a work of art to its culturally-loaded environment."¹

In some cases, the artist uses his trompe l'oeil gallery as a setting for smaller, discrete images. These may include his eclectic and highly personal drawings, silkscreen "reproductions" incorporating found imagery taken from the mass media and other sources, or "lightpieces" which are created by the fading action of the sun on construction paper. While the wall-paintings extend outward, suggesting the perceptual contingencies of a physical and social space, the smaller works effect a more concentrated, intensive re-evaluation. In different ways, the drawings, the "reproductions," and the "lightpieces" all have the effect of deferring meaning: they point outside of themselves to an absent origin, matrix, or cause of which only a simple and compelling fragment or residue can be seen.

Although this installation works independently, certain aspects of

Caramelle's aesthetic undoubtedly depend on familiarity with his broader oeuvre and exposure to his art over time. The artist intentionally leaves lacunae in each individual work or exhibition, gaps which become more fertile with meaning as one builds associations. Perhaps with this in mind, Caramelle considers the documentation of his work—the catalogs, announcements, posters, etc.—to be an intrinsic aspect of his art. He contributes to the design of these documents, choosing and placing reproductions of previous works as well as related imagery in such a way as to indicate the broader web of meaning.

For this exhibition, Caramelle chose the cover illustration for the artist sheet and requested only a subtle alteration of the publication's standard format, the shifting of the illustration's caption from the front to the back page. The photograph shows an installation similar to the present one insofar as both pieces involve a gallery space bisected by a wall and reconnected by way of the alignment of wall-paintings and other elements. The small work shown at center is one of Caramelle's characteristically jagged-edged "lightpieces."

"Dichotomy" is a word which seems to describe accurately the essence of Caramelle's art—not, however, in the sense of opposition, as in the dichotomy of good and evil, but in the astronomical sense of the dichotomous stage of an orbit during which exactly one half of a planet appears in light and the other in shadow. To see a bisected moon is more profoundly to see one's relation to the sun, to become aware of the conditions within which our seeing is held. This is the secret richness of Caramelle's

elusive vision: to see the part in the whole and the whole in the part.

Ernst Caramelle was born in Hall, Austria in 1952. A Research Fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT from 1974 through 1975, he currently lives and works in Frankfurt and New York City.

Lawrence Rinder
MATRIX Curator

¹ Guy Tosatto, "Perspective Views," trans. by Jonathan Bass, in *Ernst Caramelle* (Musée départemental de Rochechouart, 1989).

Works in MATRIX:

1. Untitled, 1991, watercolor and pigment on wall. Courtesy of the artist.
2. Untitled (Reproduction), 1990, silkscreen on paper. Lent by the artist.

Cover illustration: Museum van hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent, 1987.

Selected one-person exhibitions:

Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland '82; Kunsthalle Bern, Switzerland '86;
De Appel, Amsterdam, Netherlands '87; Musée départemental de
Rochechouart, France '89; Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, Germany '90;
Nationalgalerie Berlin, Germany '90.

Selected group exhibitions:

Project Inc., Cambridge, MA '75; Kunstmuseum Luzern, Switzerland '82;
Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Bologna, Italy '84; Museum van hedendaagse Kunst,
Ghent, Belgium '87; Mücsarnok, Budapest '89; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris,
France '90; Sydney Biennial, Australia '90.

Selected publications:

Forty Found Fakes (New York, NY: Thomas Way & Co. '79); *Blätter*
(Frankfurt, Germany: Frankfurter Kunstverein '81); *Ernst Caramelle*
(Kunsthalle Bern '86); *After Image* (Velbert, Germany: Museum Schloß
Hardenberg '89); *Ernst Caramelle* (Krefeld, Germany: Museum Haus Lange
'90).

Selected bibliography about the artist (see also catalogs under exhibitions):

Zacharopoulos, Denys. "Ernst Caramelle," *Parkett Magazin*, Nr. 9
(Zurich '86).

Algera, Kirsten. "Ernst Caramelle," *De Appel Magazin*, Nr. 2
(Amsterdam '88).

Vogelsberger, Vera. "Ernst Caramelle," *Noema Art Magazin*, Nr. 5
(Salzburg '89).

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