

ARTFORUM

Jeppe Hein
303 GALLERY

Jeppe Hein's second show at 303 Gallery—his last show here was "Please . . ." in 2008—started before visitors even entered the space. Piercing the broad storefront's frosted glass window was *Upside Down*, 2011, a telescope-like arrangement of lenses through which an unexpectedly shrunken and inverted view of the interior was visible. Hein's primary concern—shared with Olafur Eliasson and Carsten Höller among others—is the interplay of presumption and perception, with what we expect to see and what finally manifests. In *Upside Down*, as in the other works of which it here provided a distorted overview, the artist holds out the promise of a particular experience only to then deny it. What transpires is at once frustrating in its refusal of instinctively longed-for spectacle, and more nuanced than any simple stunt.

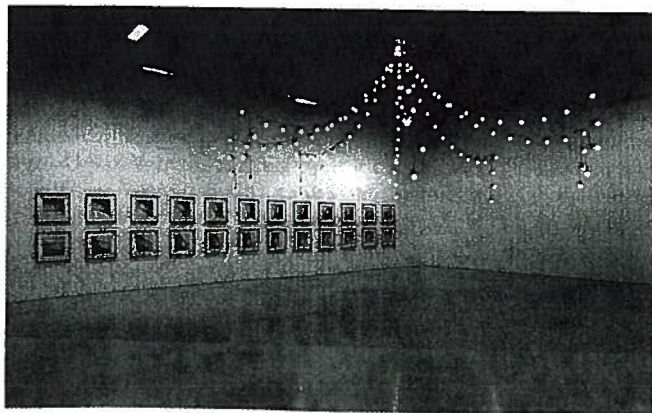
The gallery's interior is dominated by *Light Pavilion II*, 2010, a bundle of strands of illuminated lightbulbs that hangs in a loose column from the center of the ceiling. Periodically, cords attached near dangling ends of the strands pull them slowly upward to form the titular structure. A peek into the office lays bare the mechanism behind the movement. Gallery assistants routinely shoulder menial tasks, but this surely beats all: In a corner of the room, a lumberjack shirt-clad twentysomething pedals away on an exercise bike hooked up to pulleys that animate Hein's installation. It's easy to imagine Santiago Sierra casting jealous eyes over such a setup.

If *Light Pavilion II* again toys with our persistent fetishization of the "wow" factor in the context of large-scale installation by bringing things crashing irrevocably down to earth, *You*, 2011—a small hole drilled in the gallery's back wall—does the same thing more bluntly still. Where *Upside Down* at least fulfills its promise in part, a glance through this particular aperture reveals only a reflection of the viewer's own eye. Far from gaining a hoped-for insight into the gallery's private,

back-office world, we are thus confronted with nothing but our own voyeuristic impulse. It's a simple trick, and one that might seem slight in another context or in a different artist's hands, but Hein's overarching aesthetic restraint prevents the work's provocation from feeling superficial. The artist may make fools of us, but we love—or at least forgive—him for doing so.

The process on which *360° Gallery—303 Gallery (Photo Edition)*, 2011, depends is not quite as retrogressive as *Light Pavilion's*, but it has a similar clarity. Having constructed a camera that rotates on a horizontal axis while taking photographs at fifteen-degree intervals as it makes a full circle, Hein documented the gallery interior by producing a sequence of prints, shown here in two long rows. Joining the lineage of conceptually motivated empty-room projects, and refocusing attention on the hegemony of the white cube as the contemporary gallery's architectural style of choice, *360° Gallery—303 Gallery (Photo Edition)* literally upends its subject, shaking it to see what might fall out. Again, the extent to which we are accustomed to the association of a mystique with the making and showing of art comes under scrutiny, but not in such a way that rigorous argument is entirely substituted for unpredictable magic. As precise and brutally rational as they may at first appear, these projects retain roots in an individual aesthetic with a touch of eccentricity, adding up to more than the sum of their pared-down parts.

—Michael Wilson



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