

M+B

Los Angeles Times

Art review: Sam Falls at China Art Objects and M+B – *Sharon Mizota*
February 23, 2012 | 3:30 pm



In a show that spans two galleries (China Art Objects and M+B) and at least three media (sculpture, photography, painting), Sam Falls explores the intersection of color, perception, digital imagery and natural processes such as fading and rust. At times, the works' multiple references and Falls' convoluted methods threaten to make one's head spin, but that's not always a bad thing.

Time and environmental forces play a large role in Falls' work, as they do in the work of fellow L.A. artists Kim Abeles and Marie Jager, for whom sun and smog are artistic materials. The most direct expression of this proclivity is a series of works

created by simply rolling different colored sheets of paper and leaving them in the sun. The resulting images suggest ghostly white cylinders emerging from fields of rich color. They're remarkably dimensional and mysterious, and feel almost animate.

Falls also takes the weather into account in his sculptures: sheets of brightly colored aluminum folded like the beginning stages of an origami animal or pieces of steel cut to look like a piece of paper torn in two. Meant to be installed outdoors, the colored works are coated with a UV protective finish on the outside but not on the inside, which will fade over time. Similarly, one half of each of the steel works is shiny and stainless while the other will rust. All of these changes must be imagined, however, as the works are brand new and mostly installed indoors. It's an interesting proposition for a collector — a work that will refashion itself subtly over time — but it's a bit hard to appreciate before the fact.

More engaging are Falls' digital prints of abandoned houses in Joshua Tree, although this is also where things get convoluted. The artist lined the inside of the houses with colored fabric, filling the windows and doors with solid colors. He then photographed the houses and took digital samples of the fabric colors from the photographs. He digitally superimposed these colors on the print itself and then took them to Home Depot to have them matched in enamel paint, which he used to paint the "sky" on the photograph. Still with me? The resulting images are actually dynamic geometric compositions with sometimes slight, sometimes dramatic shifts in color. It's as if a home decorator went a little mad with the paint swatches, foolishly optimistic in the face of damage and decay.

Yet by layering the colors on the same image, Falls seems to be asking: Was it this color that I saw? Or this one? The fact that they're all derived from a piece of fabric hanging in a window in the desert sun is a comment on how most of the ways in which we know the world capture (and magnify) only a fraction of its physical reality. In going to absurd lengths to make this distillation clear, Falls asks us to contemplate its inverse: the immeasurable complexity of even the plainest phenomena.