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# Antonia Gurkovska

By Susan Snodgrass May 6, 2012 7:58pm



As suggested by the exhibition's title, Antonia Gurkovska (b. 1984, Bulgaria) presented a lexicon of painting in her first solo show, "Index." Even as she did so, however, she rejected gestural painterly idioms and adherence to the picture plane for practices decidedly three-dimensional; press materials liken Gurkovska to Lucio Fontana and Rudolf Stingel in her use of unconventional materials and methods of mark-making that rupture the paintings' surfaces to explore spatial concepts.

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Gurkovska built the eight paintings on view (either 2011 or 2012) by layering vinyl, leather, plastic bubble wrap, corduroy, mesh and canvas, then overpainting the compilation with acrylics, enamels and oils to create a monochromatic effect. In some instances the artist then punctured the work's outer skin with grommets or staples, as in *Index* (12 by 9 inches), in which rows of metal staples pierce a canvas support, the whole coated in a thick layer of silver paint. In other works—the 8-by-6-inch *Holes of Steel* for example, and the 60-by-48-inch *Outer*—she cut into each painting's top membrane, in both cases black vinyl, to create a series of openings that reveal a textural terrain of fabric, plastic and paint underneath.

These gashes and slits usually occur in horizontal or vertical bands that form abstract patterns typical of Op art and Post-Painterly Abstraction. Thus through repetition (and destruction) Gurkovska plays with notions of perception within certain lineages of painting. At the same time, she references the body both through her choice of materials deriving from clothing and textiles, and through a deconstructive process that metaphorically alludes to flesh and scars.

In the ambitious *Container*, an environment created for the gallery's project space, the artist treated painting as an entity both corporeal and spatial. As if turning one of her smaller-scale works inside out, she hung the room's four walls with bubble wrap—which had been given a patina of rust-colored paint—and covered its floor with nubby black vinyl. Viewers were offered an experience, simultaneously enveloping and intimate, that allowed them to revel in the optical pleasures and tactility of Gurkovska's materials. Like Gordon Matta-Clark, whose building cuts conflated inside/outside and absence/presence to comment on the decay of urban architecture, Gurkovska here performs, as in all her works, acts of excavation and reclamation to connect painting's past and future.

Photo: View of Antonia Gurkovska's installation *Container*, 2011, mixed mediums, 12 by 23½ by 12 feet; at [Kavi Gupta](#).