

## “After Malevich” at Mama Gallery

By Divulge Magazine Contributor Elizabeth Austin, photos courtesy of artsy.net and Caroline Coderoni. Robert Levine’s exhibition “After Malevich”, on view at the Mama Gallery through May 30, is a thoroughly entertaining juxtaposition of art history and pop

Robert Levine’s exhibition “After Malevich”, on view at the Mama Gallery through May 30, is a thoroughly entertaining juxtaposition of art history and pop culture. Levine has created a series of works that layer pop culture icons such as Superman, Batman, and Alfred E. Neuman, over prints of paintings by Russian Suprematist painter Kazimir Malevich (1878-1935).

In describing his inspiration, Levine said: “I’ve always loved Malevich, he is one of my favorite artists. When I saw the cover of a Superman comic where Superman is throwing a car, I noticed that the angle at which he is throwing it matches the angle of the square in one of Malevich’s signature paintings.” Levine was referencing Malevich’s Suprematist Composition: White on White (1918), which is in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Levine took White on White and transformed it into the powerful and engaging After Malevich (w/Superman). This work brings Superman to life while adding a level of gravitas to this iconic superhero. Superman is holding up the square from Malevich’s painting, reminiscent of the classic image of Atlas holding up the world in Greek mythology, but Superman appears ready to launch the square into the stratosphere at any moment.

Another highlight of the exhibition is After Malevich (w/2 Lincolns), which Levine described as a “visual pun”, by including two icons: Abraham Lincoln and a Lincoln Town Car, in the same painting. The exhibition also includes a series of small collages featuring other icons including Alfred E. Neuman, cover boy of the humor magazine Mad, and Orson Wells in the title role of his classic film Citizen Kane. These smaller works line a wall in an elevated room of the gallery, allowing the viewer to take them in one by one.

The exhibition is well curated, designed to maximize the viewer’s experience with white walls and plenty of space to see and experience Levine’s work. Mama Gallery co-owners Eli Consilvio and Adarsha Benjamin chose this specific series of Levine’s, created in 2011-2014, because of its grounding in art history combined with a fun and humorous view of iconography and pop culture.

“After Malevich” is on view at Mama Gallery in downtown L.A. from May 9 to May 30.