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Michael van den Besselaar, "Nostalgic About the Future"

By Time Out editors Thu Apr 30 2009

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Nostalgic About The Future #2 Photograph: Courtesy of the Artist and Black & White Gallery

Time Out Ratings :



As its title suggests, everything about Dutch painter Michael van den Besselaar's second solo exhibition at Black & White feels oddly familiar, even if the locations depicted therein are all at least partly fictitious. But while the paradoxical sensation that the artist seeks to evoke is unarguably worthy of consideration, his project suffers from a derivative formal approach that effectively stifles its Conceptual promise.

Ripping several leaves from the Gerhard Richter book of artful affectlessness, van den Besselaar renders seemingly endless variations on the California Modern house in a flat, deadpan style that, while appropriate, palls nonetheless. Only his jarring acid color keeps things alive, though even this begins to lose its luster by the show's halfway mark.

Dominant here is the show's eponymous series, in which slick—and eerily depopulated—show-homes emerge mirage-like from landscaped gardens or in the shadow of distant mountains. Often reducing these backdrops to blurs of virtual motion, and steering tints violently from positive to negative and back again, the artist endeavors to conjure a hallucinatory arena in which diverse signifiers of period and place are cast adrift in a stylist's fever dream.

Unfortunately, the cultural-historical anxiety that this aims to provoke is subsumed by the sheer airlessness of its presentation. Exacerbated by a crowded hang that also does quieter works such as the embossed all-white "Mirage Series" (2006) no favors, the final effect is less truly disorienting and more simply, exhausting.—*Michael Wilson*

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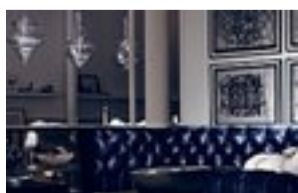
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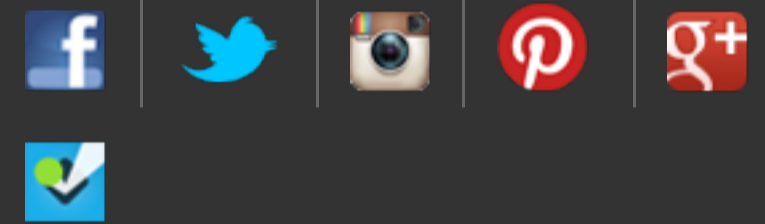
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