

Carl Fudge at Ronald Feldman

Kaleidoscopic complexity has for many years characterized the work of London-born, Brooklyn-based Carl Fudge, so that his new, dramatically simpler canvases require some adjustment on the viewer's part. Obfuscating but not completely disguising his source material—often images from Japanese prints and modern anime—through the slice and splice of digital manipulation, Fudge's formerly brittle, faceted fields of reticulate outline and flat, local color celebrated entropy, dissolution and the fragmentation of the image. The process yielded something grand, if seemingly fleeting, a snapshot of a metastasizing visual culture: frenzied, proliferating.

So it is a reasonable and interesting next step for him to pick up on the camouflage and faux-Rorschach motifs of Warhol's most abstract work, as he does in this exhibition, titled "Camouflaged." Black silkscreened silhouettes on white or vibrant red-orange grounds make up the "Camouflage" series. Each work is acrylic on canvas, around 4 feet tall and titled *Projective*. The series also recalls, in its apparent proliferation, its machine-made quality and bilateral symmetry, the late-1980s heraldic "Drawings" of Allan McCollum. Excepting the squawking ducklings that emerge from *Projective 122*, these paintings only suggest the presence of hidden imagery; they are static, more shout than shimmer. Hung among them was *Level 4* (6 feet square, 2005), in bald black and white but recalling the graphical complexity and sense of flux of the artist's earlier work.

Also on view were seven 82-by-72-inch canvases from the "Overflow" series, which is based on an image from *shunga*, the erotic subgenre of ukiyo-e, distorted beyond recognition. The same black-on-white scaffolding appears in each: a rippling, vaguely waterfall-like schema of lines ranging from thick and blunt to thin and brittle. A single-color river descends through the center of the design and pools at the lower right. Repeating the same structure with different colors is a familiar method

for Fudge, as it was for Warhol. In these brawny, comparatively blunt canvases, the linear structure and especially the colors are radically simplified; in *Overflow Yellow* (2004), for example, the industrial color and stouter lines of the central, dominant section thrust the passage into the foreground, suggesting an entirely different conception of pictorial space than the earlier works. However, the impact of these canvases is lessened considerably by the visual tedium of their fundamental similarity, like items in a showroom.

Early in his career, Fudge hit on a good idea and ran with it, fashioning a distinctive, focused body of work straddling not only digital and comics-derived art and, of course, Pop, but also seriality and Pattern and Decoration. It is too soon to tell how his new direction will build upon this early success. But if he shakes off the assembly-line conceit that casts a chill over these new works, he will remain worth watching.

—Stephen Maine



Carl Fudge: *Overflow Yellow*, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 82 by 72 inches; at Ronald Feldman.