

Corners

(Text edited on the occasion of the exhibition *Painting yourself into corners* at Irène Laub Gallery, Brussels (BE), 2018)

painting yourself into a corner

1. *(idiomatic) To create a predicament or problem for yourself that leaves you with no good alternatives or solutions.*

Three lines make as many folds and you have a corner. Simply where two walls meet in a room, usually a floor or ceiling thrown in. A place to get stuck, to loll about, waste time, stick a plant just out of the way, a roaches last refuge, a place to sweep all the dust. “Go sit in a corner,” annoyed parents bark at mischievous children. Paint the floor wrong and this is where you end up, either stuck waiting for it all to dry or just walk across and fuck the job and your shoes up. It’s a lonely place, the corner, unless of course you tuck yourself there with a lover. Then a corner provides just a tease of concealment. In a dark room with just a little noise, others can walk on by without seeing your stolen kiss.

No one can paint himself into a corner like Panos Papadopoulos. Elegant, curious, somehow comic but also sad, Panos’ corners come together just so. The vast swathes of emptiness don’t even feel blank, they are the body on which hangs Panos’ slips of wrist. Even when he paints the darkness, the white paper or canvas beneath like cracks of light to make a room, it’s just a more blanketed body with just a sliver of alluring skin revealed. Worlds are summoned here with a few lines. To make something so simple as a corner as well as he does takes incredible skill and style, a supple panache not every wrist possesses. Ask Morandi about bottles and you might find yourself in similarly impossible predicaments, of how to make something so humble with such subtle difference and beauty through so many iterations over time. “...to touch the core, the essence of things. Even in as simple a subject, a great painter can achieve a majesty of vision and an intensity of feeling to which we immediately respond” said Morandi. This is true, but it’s also true that no two bottles or corners are ever the same. Each moment is precious, each shadow and shift unique. There will be never be a moment quite like this one ever again. The same bottle, the same corner is always different, unique. However it wears its shadows, holds its color (a sunset pink, a smeary green). Perhaps even a “simple subject” can reveal these things all the more powerfully. Some Buddhist wrote their haikus for their last words, those brisk little three line poems intended to stand-in for a lifetime of contemplation and liberation, release and compassion. Like a haiku, it only takes three lines to make a corner too.

And there aren’t just corners here, but plants and lamps, bodies in motion and reclined. All made with the same simplicity and grace as the humble corners that so often fold behind them. Look long enough at anything, though especially perhaps a corner, and the lines waver and bend with a shift of light, with a drink or three, with the sadness or joy that shapes anything and everything we see. To summon so much with so little.

Andrew Berardini

(Andrew Berardini (1982) is a Los Angeles-based writer, art critic and curator. Co-founder of the *Art Book Review*, he is a regular publisher and contributor to many magazines, including *Artforum*, *Mousse*, *Frieze*, *Artslant* and *ArtReview*. He has organized exhibitions at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the Castello di Rivoli in Turin.)