

Phillips, Christopher: „Berlin. Anton Henning at Wohnmaschine“,
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BERLIN

Anton Henning at Wohnmaschine

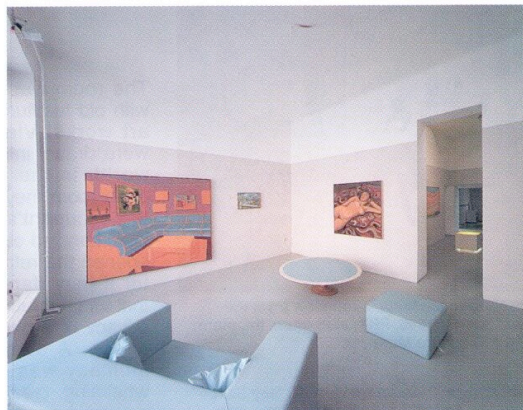
Over the past decade, German artist Anton Henning has pushed painterly pastiche in dizzying directions. Gleeefully mixing motifs and stylistic traits associated with diverse modern masters (van Gogh, Matisse, Magritte, Lichtenstein), he also borrows freely from such sources as 19th-century plein-air painting and 1950s pinup images. Since 1998, he has presented his canvases within elaborate Pop-style lounge installations in which the paintings

serve as ostensibly anonymous wall decoration. In this show, however, called “Interieurs 2001,” the installation aspect abruptly receded. With a small baby-blue plastic sofa the only loungeable element, visitors had no choice but to turn their full attention to the recent paintings on display.

The twists and turns of Henning’s method are evident in *Interieur No. 83*, which is based on a Lichtenstein pastiche of van Gogh’s famous view of his spartan bedroom at Arles. Henning depicts this room even more schematically than Lichtenstein, using blocks of flat, washed-out color and psychedelic bands that undulate across the floor. Odd

details abound. Van Gogh’s wooden chair, for instance, has been replaced by tubular Bauhaus furniture, and on the bedroom wall hangs a Warholesque version of a van Gogh still life. Nearby in the gallery you could spot the Henning “original” of this work, a posterlike composition in which blazing orange and magenta blossoms perch atop brilliant green stems.

Despite his pleasure in recycling celebrated modernist images, Henning has not neglected to introduce his own quirky signature motifs, such as the psychedelic pinwheel which he has dubbed the “hennling.” *Flower Still Life No. 60* presents five of these colorful spirals—in orange, yellow, powder blue, pink and magenta—rising from a glass vase. The same woozy pattern appears in more subdued hues in *Pinup No. 65*, this time covering a sofa on which sprawls a young female model apparently lifted from one of Picabia’s late works. Curiously, Henning’s ricocheting visual citations seem designed to distract the viewer from the artist’s real virtuosity as a painter—and from what is evidently his guilty, long-term love affair with modernist painting. —Christopher Phillips



Anton Henning: Installation view of exhibition, 2001;
at Wohnmaschine.