

TAMMI CAMPBELL

Strike reconsiders the many tropes and utopian claims of the Modernist canon through a rethinking of its materials, techniques, and narratives. Referencing iconic Modernist and Minimalist works by Morris Lewis, Barnett Newman, Frank Stella and others, *Strike* continues to engage with these familiar, iconic artworks through the guise of mimicry. However, in addition to the use of simulated packing materials to both withhold and interrupt a sense of completion, a new layer is added: that of re-enacting. Using historically accurate materials such as mineral-spirit-based Acrylic paints designed for conservation, original works are repainted to scale as seeming replicas. What appear, as uncanny copies are further revised by Campbell's conceptual and material interventions. Upon close viewing, apparent likeness is instead a meticulous, often times absurd performance.

Reimagining seminal Modernist and Minimalist works as in-transit, in-progress, and incomplete, *Strike* also considers how historical narratives might be encountered through the lens of a contemporary, feminist present. Alluding to the privileged role many of these iconic works played at a time when there was no real representation of women artists, Campbell invites us to think about how reconfigurations of works from this period are often still contextualized within Modernist narratives of exclusion. Against this backdrop, Campbell utilizes the word *Strike* as a way to speak of a form of protest as well as provocation. Intruding (and at times, protruding) upon the self-contained, male-privileged rhetoric of these works, Campbell attempts to strike at (or ignite) the presence of Modernist high drama while simultaneously deflating and ridiculing any embedded pretense at unity and wholeness.

The artifice and restaging in *Strike* take as their particular target the Modernist project of autonomy, or the idea that the subject of a work of art is only itself, independent of anything external. This particular ideology imagined an art that could reduce form to an absolute essence, both ultimately self-sustaining and beyond criticism. Rejecting whatever failed such criteria, this search for essence became the search for a kind of purity, or truth. To this end, the truth of a work of art was undeniable, self-evidently universal, wherein understanding was instantaneous with the experience of viewing. Adversely, Campbell's reworkings short-circuit such a claim to truth and imperviousness. In her reimagining of Modernist works in pre- or post-exhibition states, their claims to an all-at-onceness, or absolute truth-to-form are partially or completely hidden from view. In this way, Campbell recasts these works as unable to fully articulate, continually stopping and restarting, becoming strange and unconvincing versions of themselves.

While questioning the very idea of the copy versus the genuine, Campbell's work asks what notions of authenticity are at risk in a project more in line with evocation than imitation. To evoke in this sense is to reanimate rather than simply provide a seamless clone. In works which revisit their historical references more obliquely, Campbell both conjures and defers the authority of the original source. In Yves Klein's well-known '*Leap into the Void*' photomontage of 1960, the tarpaulin meant to catch the artist is deliberately erased in service to the illusion of attempted flight. In Campbell's reincarnation, the

missing tarp, constructed entirely of paint in *Yves Klein blue*, is both evoked and denied its dematerialized mythos.

Materially, Campbell's work reveals a thorough and intense attention to detail that brings to mind the paintings of Vija Celmins, or Campbell's previous homage to Agnes Martin. Embedded within her doubling, camouflage, and interventions are subtle, often inverted messages of rebellion in paint. Inevitably, her work invites close readings beyond material precision and skill, aiming to challenge the problematic claims to impervious truth, autonomy, and authority ingrained in the story of Modernist art.

by Kim Neudorf