

ARTFORUM

Artforum.com Critic's Picks October 2007

Peter Schuyff

NICOLE KLAGSBRUN GALLERY 526 West 26th Street, Room
213 September 7–October 13

Peter Schuyff is more than a contemporary surrealist—the psychological discomfiture that ensues when he shamelessly superimposes his now-archetypal abstract ideograms over a distinct visual field or genre-painting image is only a humorous subtext. His practice—comprising preposterous visual juxtapositions—is grounded in critical strategies of interference. Perhaps out of favor in today's more sentimental cultural milieu, poststructuralism and its deferral of meaning remain salient topics for many artists. Still, an analysis of Schuyff's work in terms of surrealism is not erroneous. Addressing the works' playful, charming, and strange qualities speaks to the heart of the artist's engagement with fact and fantasy, volume and flatness, abstraction and representation. Yet this new body of work is so much more than a simple rehearsal of the visual pleasures of pop surrealism and attendant fundamental dualisms.



Lolipop, 2007, oil on found painting, 16 x 12".

Schuyff now lives again in Amsterdam, and this show is based on paintings and drawings that he found in Holland. Schuyff assaults the traditions of portraiture, landscape, nautical imagery, and a host of other genre pictures by positioning his puzzling, nonrepresentational trompe l'oeil patterns over the found paintings. The buttonlike objects that he renders with the illusion of real artifacts obscure the faces of his found portraits, such that the eyes of the sitters peer through the holes. Yet obvious references to masks or eyeglasses fail to account for the illogical visual languages at play. The incongruence between the found painting and Schuyff's abstract overlays obviates any dialogic exchange, casting the works as interventions in the politics of representation. *Clown*, 2007, one excellent example of Schuyff's witty style of bricolage, makes critical deconstruction as much fun to look at as it is useful to analysis.

—Michelle Grabner