



Left:
Elad Lassry
Lipstick
 2009
 C-print
 Unique
 14 x 11 x 1 inches
 Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York,
 and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

Opposite page:
Elad Lassry
Laminated Structure (For Test and Heart)
 2009
 C-print
 Unique
 14 x 11 x 1 inches
 Courtesy of the artist, Luhring Augustine, New York,
 and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles

NEW ARTIST

ELAD LASSRY

BY AMANI OLU

Elad Lassry uses photography, sculpture, found images, and collage to investigate perception and context in visual culture. He photographs people, animals, food, and readymade and fabricated everyday objects, and appropriates imagery from various sources in popular culture and academia. By confronting dominant sculptural and painterly concerns, Lassry attempts to push his pictures beyond their traditional photographic space. The significance of objects, color theory, appropriation, dimensionality, and developing each image as a singular concept are paramount. Despite the recognizable objects and seductive colors in Lassry's work, once one is engaged it is easy to become lost in his maze of mysterious and often strange content. Enter at your own risk.

Artists assign critical meaning to ordinary objects through noticing — elevating them to a place beyond function, positioned around a theoretical framework. Lassry's photographs of objects, however, represent different ideas. "The objects," he says, "are not as significant as one might think, because they serve as 'stand-ins.' I use them to serve a conceptual space, to investigate a 'type' of 'picture.'" This is the case in *Lipstick*, which one may have the urge to read as a conventional image of beauty placed on a pedestal. Instead, it explores the intersection between sculpture, painting, and product photography. In addition, by painting the frames to reflect a central color in the image, Lassry points to the readymade aspect of pictures and further establishes that

his photographs are objects. This reversal of object significance, perpetual volleying between mediums, and color play is about experimenting with implied space.

Dimensionality is an important theme in Lassry's work, as seen in *Laminated Structure (For Test and Heart)*. The image starts with a box made of different strips of Plexiglas. Then using a large-format camera, he photographs the front of the box. This perspective flattens it, rendering it two-dimensional. To return the box to a three-dimensional object, he prints the photograph and collages two found images atop the box as if it were a pedestal for the found images. To further signify that the viewer is looking at an object with depth, Lassry allows the box to cast shadows. As a result, the work has the characteristics of a Ping-Pong ball, bouncing back and forth between two dimensions, leaving the viewer in a state of suspended anxiety.

Appropriation is another prominent aspect of Lassry's practice. Depending on the picture, he presents found images as the work itself (*Portrait, Royal Blue*) or collages it with other photographs (*Green Plinth, Her, Red Neon Tube*). Appropriation is a contentious issue, one that continues to suffer from the Modernist position on authorship and originality. Like artists such as Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler, and Barbara Kruger, Lassry appropriates images to examine how they function once they are divorced from their original meaning. He approaches these found

images as if they have the same potential as original images. He says, "I am looking to give them new life as opposed to pointing out their past life." This is evident in *Drinks, Cheese*, an appropriated 1970s magazine advertisement. In it, Lassry conceals all contextual information with a strip of foil, making it impossible to discern whether the advertisement was for beer, prophylactics, or car insurance. He liberates the image and returns it to a still life. Free of context, the work is ripe for new meaning and interpretation. By giving equal weight to found and original images, he asks the viewer to reconsider aesthetic hierarchies.

Lassry's photographs attempt to challenge ideas about the status of contemporary picture making. There is no narrative in his work; he makes a photograph only when his questions about photography build tension. Finding answers or making definitive statements is not as important as creating situations in which his ideas about pictures and how they function in visual culture can flourish.

