New Editions: Roland Fischer

Façades on Paper IV (2012)
Eight screenprint on two-ply museum board, 35 x 25 inches. Edition of 100 each. Printed and published by Durham Press, Durham, PA. $1200 each, $7500 the set.

This is the fourth set of screenprints Roland Fischer has adapted from his architectural photographs. Each isolates a section of a building façade, filling the picture plane edge-to-edge with repeating geometries that hover on the brink of abstraction. The original photographs are nearly six feet tall (180 x 125 cm) and, mounted without frames, are almost architectural in themselves. But they are also weirdly “virtual”: scrubbed clean of dirt, rust, people or bugs, these real things come to look like CAD-renderings of imaginary ones.

Many of the buildings are recognizable to anyone who pays attention to modern architecture: the armadillo hobnailed surface of the Selfridges Building in Birmingham (UK), the chromatic riot of the Museum Brandhorst in Munich or, in Façades on Paper I (2001), the once banal, now heartbreaking, silver stripes of the World Trade Center. These buildings can be identified from flat snippets because architects are increasingly being asked to provide “signature” structures for corporations and museums—three dimensional spaces that work like two-dimensional logotypes to help publicize a brand.

Fischer extends this game into a further round: the physical building that was developed through digital renderings, with an eye toward its potential thumbnail pictorial reproduction, is represented through digitally altered photography as flawless pattern, then given a new, flat, shiny physicality on the wall. Finally it is re-reproduced at a domestic, “collectable” scale in screenprint, with an entirely different and highly specific set of surface properties. The drunken checkerboard of the Port 1010 Building in Melbourne’s Digital Harbour could have been built with Fischer’s camera in mind. Digital Harbour describes the building’s façade as referencing “the themes and visual codes of our technological era. Offset precast concrete panels and solar glazed curtain walling allude to the visual language of circuit boards, bar codes, morse codes [sic] and binary numerals.” It takes careful looking at Fischer’s print to recognize the black rectangles as windows and the orange stripes as architectural masonry. Look still closer at the screenprint, however, and what reads as shadow beneath that masonry is revealed as a bunch of tiny dots on paper, the familiar photo-mechanical sleight of hand. Two dimensions or three? Photographic document or imaginative eye-candy? Corporeal shelter or corporate shill? Check D for “all of the above.”