

## Left

### PAUL PFEIFFER

*Playroom*

2012

Steel, glass one-way mirror, wood, MDF, fabric, upholstery and lights, 158.1 x 182.9 x 76.2 cm.

Courtesy Paula Cooper Gallery, New York.

## Right

### JAY CHUNG and Q TAKEKI MAEDA

*Modus Tollens*

2003

C-print, 27.9 x 48.3 cm.

Courtesy the artists, Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin, and REDCAT Gallery, Los Angeles.

## LOS ANGELES

### REDCAT

# 10 Years of Jay and Q

Commemorating ten years of partnership in art-making, artistic duo Jay Chung and Q Takeki Maeda presented two newly commissioned works in their first major solo exhibition in the United States, at REDCAT, Los Angeles. As is typical of their rigorously studied and highly conceptual oeuvre, outcomes and results were amusing and quaint, and subverted expectations in exhibition practices and art traditions.

The duo's anniversary milestone was celebrated a few months prior to the REDCAT exhibition, when Chung and Maeda endowed the prize money for a two-day horse-jumping competition near their current home base in Berlin, Germany. For the ceremony, the racetrack was decorated with silk-screened, nylon commemorative banners emblazoned with the words "10 Years of Jay and Q," each featuring an illustration of a pair of horses wearing different types of hats. Transferred to the gallery environment, the colorful, illustrated banners looked comical. Instead of the pomp and circumstance associated with these types of competitions and ceremonies, as brought to mind by the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes and other thoroughbred traditions, the documentation of this particular event could only be described as underwhelming. The sole trace of the weekend-long competition, besides the banners, was a video recording shown on a tiny television screen high up on an oblique supporting column of the gallery—the random placement seeming like an afterthought.

The distilling of complex ideas and expansive projects down to the barest minimum and slightest trace is typical of works by 36-year-old Chung and 35-year-old Maeda. For their inaugural collaboration a decade ago, entitled *Modus Tollens* (2003), the

artists wove a complicated narrative in which the pair forced themselves to believe that Maeda had to return permanently to his home country of Japan and discontinue all contact with Chung—a kindred friend since their first meeting at Frankfurt's Städelschule art academy a few years earlier. The two friends convinced themselves of this narrative for a month's time, and at the end of the agreed-upon 30 days, when Maeda did not leave, they repeated the performative project yet again. The only remnants of this work, besides the memories lodged in the artists' minds, are two small prosaic photographs of the pair standing in front of an airplane, capturing Maeda's fictional, impending departure. It is as if the artists were purposefully denuding their work of any importance or significance. Considering the overwhelming popularity of social platforms such as Facebook and Instagram to capture every aspect of our often mundane lives, the starkness of Chung and Maeda's documentation of this project seems especially striking.

The subtlety of Chung and Maeda's work is indeed refreshing. *Untitled* (2012) takes up a similarly understated yet complex and weighty presentation, reaching back to conceptual art history's roots and forebears. Chung and Maeda hired an unknown actor to emotively deliver a composite of various passages and writings that had been compiled from three generations of artist-thinkers. In a three-channel, digital-video installation, the actor delivers a trio of monologues, eloquently orating on the ills and pitfalls of the conceptual/postconceptual and avant-garde/neo-avant-garde movements after Duchamp. In researching quotations on avant-garde and conceptual art of the last hundred-odd years, Chung and Maeda were struck by how each generation seemed to harbor disdain for those that followed them ("follow" in terms of chronology but also in the sense of mimicry). Although the assembled texts originated from across many decades and cultural and artistic phenomena, there is still somehow a sense of seamlessness in the dialogue, especially when delivered by a single anonymous entity—proving that some things never change and (art) history does indeed repeat itself.

Capping off the exhibition, the actor intoned: "It seems there is a lack of reflection. I think in the process of referencing, a lot of artists forget to make the art piece." The veracity of this statement was thrown into sharp relief in the almost-empty exhibition space. The difference is that Chung and Maeda, in their astute reflections, did not forget the art object, but rather chose to forgo it and instead revel in the experience and process of conceptualization.

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