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JD Williams



Courtesy Galerie Cinzia Friedlaender
JD Williams' untitled works of charchol and caesin on paper, all 2008

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The three half-circles set atop a rectangle, with a missing circle-shaped slice, appearing in different sizes and angles throughout [J.D. Williams's](#) work, are immediately recognizable as Mickey Mouse. More precisely, the entirely black form looks like a Mickey-Mouse Pez dispenser shown in silhouette. But the shape, which functions like a signature tying together the predominantly black and white paintings, drawings, silkscreens, and sculptures that Williams presents in his first Berlin solo show, is actually a reference to [Antonin Artaud's](#) drawing *Bouillabaisse of shapes in a tower of Babel*.

Within Williams's own work, the form develops an independent life that evokes both the cultural connotations of its origin and also the Disney association, but is not totally tied to either referent. Instead, the signature shape becomes the exhibition's hero as it hops from abstract compositions into surreal silk screens of dandies with grotesque rubber heads or odd alien octopus-like creatures sucking on human brains — a modernist Mickey Mouse creature enjoying sophisticated adventures, as if he were Mickey's avant-garde cousin.

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William's works on paper are often spare and treated with tanning techniques, his wood sculptures are slightly rickety and weathered, and his thickly painted acrylic canvases have the basic, pared down geometry of Modernism. This sense of anachronism gives the work an aged appearance appropriate for Williams's Dada sensibility. However, the most striking aspect of the works, seen individually or all together, is Williams's ability to create something familiar yet utterly uncanny, and consistently engaging.

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