

ARTFORUM



David Askevold **Mandarin**

Los Angeles

03.24.07 - 04.28.07

To reproduce a painting that never existed is to induce memory, and in this exhibition, titled "Three Easy Pieces," David Askevold attempts to do so as an exorcism of his early aesthetic considerations. In his painting *The Missing Link*, 2006, the artist offers thumbnail views of four nearly identical canvases that he did not produce between 1963 and 1966 (a period when he was studying art in New York). An adjacent canvas, *1964, 2006*, presents one of these images, a magenta-hued abstraction composed of translucent layers of Giclee ink, at full scale. In this and other works, Askevold uses mathematical permutations of the number four as an underlying but ultimately negligible code for the meaning of his compositions. *Equation for a Modern Miracle (A)* and *(B)* (both 2007) are arrangements of text, alphanumeric symbols, and literary reference that point to a shared system of logic while offering little more insight.

Though the understated pleasure of Askevold's new work rests on its fallibility (and the fallibility of its history), the artist creates a clearly delineated critique in his collaborative painting *Ampersand*, 2007. Composed with partner Norma Ready, the piece quotes a Mother Goose alphabet rhyme that the artists dedicate to GEORGE W AND TONY B. Hinging on the use of & and AND, the nursery rhyme becomes a metaphor for the allies' dubious foreign policy and joint international actions. Read like a cautionary tale for children, the textual painting is an admonition of those who induce not memory but political fealty.

Catherine Taft