

It is a cold winter, and history hangs pregnant in the air. The banks are failing and recession looms. Who knows what might happen next? Who knows where it all might end?

At this pressing time, CHELSEA space plays host to Sharon Kivland's *A Wind of Revolution Blows / The Storm is on the Horizon*. How appropriate this show that links the vagaries of fashion to the turning tide of politics and revolution. Yet time flies on apace, and as I write, the show is all ready to be torn down again, the gallery to be gutted like a department store. By the time you read this it may be gone.

One is surprised, really, not to find a price-guide somewhere (for these precious articles must be saleable). Or is one expected to inquire directly as to a certain piece? Does one even *haggle*? Doubtless this uncertainty betrays my vulgar proletarian standing. Like everyone these days, I'm only window-shopping (despite our urge, our *duty* as citizens to spend again). Yet Kivland herself is not averse to sales of course; there is an accompanying book available: *A Wind of Revolution Blows / The Storm is on the Horizon: Fashion: A Glossary of Terms* is written by Esther Leslie and illustrated by the artist. Themes of 'woman' as object and subject of politics and fashion are explored by way of Marx, Benjamin, Baudelaire. This delightful souvenir is even advertised in the space as on *sale* (in the sense of a discount). I've no idea whether this is an ironic statement.

I was surprised even more so by the 'Antique kidskin gloves, foil letterpress blocking' of *Mes Devises*. What arrested me, quite unexpectedly, was their colour: white for *liberté*, mauve for *fraternité*, faun for *égalité*; *ou la mort* is black, with lettering in perfect red (precisely as it should be, of course). This is my way in to noticing colour in Kivland's work, and the surprise is that I should do so when her use of colour could so easily seem... coincidental, or *simply* conventional. That would be an error on my part, yet still I'm not quite sure – *liberté* is white of course, *ou la mort* is black, but how might *fraternité* be mauve? By the bruising one inflicts on one's brother, the uneasy *fraternité* of revolution? And if *égalité* is off-white, is this because equality is never quite just-so, that some are more equal than others, so to speak? Perhaps I'm saying too much - but I am sure these gloves *do* something, that they point, as it were, to an insistence on colour.

I should have known when entering the space, I should have noticed the eye drawn from the loud spectacle of a stuffed squirrel and stoat locked in political dialogue (*Mes Bêtes Sauvages*), away to the delicate shade of pink chosen to dress the wall beside the reception desk. This isn't just prettification, not *just* a colloquial feminization of the space. Pinks are everywhere in this show, from the title of a screen-print (*Rose Water*) to the roses and rosy cheeks cut from old postcards (*We Have Seen Nothing Yet but Roses*), back again to this not-quite-candy-pink wall (the same shade repeated in the vitrines around which the show gravitates). Each instance is so slightly unique; each flits, uneasily and at any moment both sensuous and insipid.

Time passes, quickly or slowly, moments read or centuries lost, and all the while these little flashes of colour. Kivland's show is a spectacle, but one so delicately restrained that one could miss it; passing in a rush, one could hear only the slogans of revolutions, revolutions already passed. There is a feast here for those of a more refined and patient taste though - and the labour of its digestion is split between the senses and the imagination, in Bourgeois fashion. Indeed, I can't imagine Kivland's work without an associated text - which is not to say that the text is a crutch, nor her objects mere illustrations (even her images are objects, fixed and finished in their exquisite frames). One can *see* the velvet, but one cannot *touch* it - and its touch is all one yearns for. Finally then let me speak of the reds, the shocking velvet box which genuinely disturbed me (*Noms Propres*), the red ribbons which one finds around the necks of the squirrel (*Mes Bêtes Sauvages*) and the women of the Commune (*Mes Pétroleuses*). Here is the slit of the guillotine, and the red flag of revolution: stop everything; change mode.

Outside it is grey, and the trees are nude. There are only two cities we could be in - and we are not in Paris.

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