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ARTFORUM

June 2014

Leidy Churchman
Silberkuppe
by Hili Perlson



View of "Leidy Churchman," 2014

A large painting, *Big Kali (Goddess of Time and Death)* (all works cited 2014), depicts the five-headed, four-limbed Hindu goddess in bright yellow, red, and teal. Situated opposite is *Tide of Night*, a black oil painting, nearly monochromatic, save for an unpainted sliver along its top edge—a pared-down representation of spume above dark waters. The tidal wave and the deity together evoke force, violence, and mystery, as do other paintings included in Leidy Churchman's latest exhibition. Another section, however, introduces a new motif entirely: A painted auction sign reads SEIZED ASSETS FROM VIOLATORS OF THE LAW.

Churchman's flattened images and clearly defined blocks of colors reference 1960s Pop vis-à-vis the work of Alex Katz or David Hockney, mixed in with a nod at naive art and themes related to imprisonment. Most literally, *Chief Police USA*, for example, depicts a police officer's badge steamrollered onto a square surface. *Flotsam and Jetsam*, a twelve-part work, includes an untreated canvas encased in a black-painted frame with the text JAIL printed in black and white amid an oil stain. In the rest of the smaller-scaled works, there are also brand logos, a skeleton, two repetitions of the tide, and the auction sign, where silhouettes of the auctioned valuables are rendered as unpainted areas on the raw canvas.

The exhibition, titled "The Fruit Stare," borrows its name from a passage by scholar and animal trainer Vicki Hearne, which describes the Orangutan's intense staring technique for spotting fruit hidden amid tropical canopies. Churchman, through his associative output, here turns the gaze inward, into a conceptual one: The Indian deity stares out from five pairs of eyes at a Minimalist painting imprisoned within its objectification, evoking the issues raised by the critical contemplation that makes an object art.