

Wohnseifer's work often appropriates, at varying degrees, a familiar history of art as learned through textbooks. The use of text may bring to mind artists from Laurence Weiner, Joseph Kosuth to Richard Hamilton, Andy Warhol, and more recently the likes of Martin Creed, not because of style or application and colour, but because of the use of text and language as a visual medium, a sign pointing to something else. But Wohnseifer works have a multiplicity of language, where imagery and colour speak as text, representative of something more deeply remembered through our experience in the everyday as well as in the textbooks or other moments of encountering works of art, the two visual and verbal collide counteracting or ridiculing the other and subverting what that visual experience might be. The words written become ridiculous on these backgrounds, yet through this mechanism they present something more sinister that is recognisable in the advertising and media industries.

This constantly shifting space is a result of the artist's ability to pull all parts of social and private experience into one instance, legitimising the digital age as a continuation of different parts of our social and cultural life. The experience of receiving inbox spam (see Spam Painting No. 27 (The #1.../abstrakt), 2006) is no less appropriately placed into the artwork than references to his own memory of 1970s Germany (the clash of private and public memory merged perfectly in his 1999 installation at Museum Ludwig Köln, where the artist presented Carl Andre styled panels painted in Otl Alcher's colour scheme for the 1972 Olympic games in Munich, which was interrupted by news of the Red Army Faction attack, the artist's first memory of television). Wohnseifer shifts the various parts of our daily public and private, real or hyper-real experience to a point that definition of what we encounter as an artwork is almost impossible and as Raimar Stange wrote, the artist's presentation is "...well balanced between the simply knowable and the readable, between dematerialisation and visualisation."¹

The *Thin Commandments* relate to the mode of making oneself articulate, making sense of the artwork either through speaking or writing, which can often seem reductive. The procedure of looking becomes somewhat murky and reading becomes confused. So to articulate, to describe or find the language of description or rather, to contextualise seems ironic when we consider what these works represent. Indeed like the essence of a lifestyle created by one product as is familiar in advertising, so too the meaning of what it is to be better, to be thinner, here stated in simplistic phrases, as credo, is evocative of religious dogma, deviation from which equalling heresy plunges us into another less organised and therefore immoral and miserable world.

Art has never denied the strength of its bond with consumer culture and although we might like to imagine a purest removal from the everyday, it would be dishonest to suggest art only works on the subliminal level of experience. The desire for the thinner, other body has connotations to another being, the absurdity of which is highlighted through its appropriation in the context of an artwork. It is easy to see Wohnseifer as appropriating ready-made cultural signifiers, but here the signifier does not so smoothly link to the sign



Front: *The Thin Commandments 1*, 2010.
Above: *The Thin Commandments II*, 2010.

for the words have been spoken by individuals and these words become phrases representing something disturbingly personal to the viewer, acting rather as social signposts for our time.
-Rebecca Harris

Endnotes:

1. Raimar Stange, 'Of Logos and Spams', in, Spike, Wien/Berlin, Autumn 2007

Since graduating with a degree in Art History from the University of East Anglia in Norwich, Rebecca has gained broad research, project and writing experience within a number of arts organisations including Tate Britain, the Barbican Centre, Modern Painters Magazine as well as galleries including Hauser & Wirth. Rebecca received an MA in Curating from Goldsmiths College, London in 2005 and while maintaining her own curatorial practice, she has worked independently on educational projects as well as curated shows of contemporary artists; also recently working for organisations including the Victoria & Albert Museum, Tate Archive, as a researcher and writer, developing an expertise in Modernism, Post Modernism and Contemporary Art practice. Her own personal work aims to consider the possibility of writing in imagining the visual, the identification of an artwork through notions of reading and writing in the encounter of art as part of a legacy within the art historical canon as opposed to historical narrative, this forming part of ongoing research as part of her PhD, currently titled 'Textuality, Forms of 'Reading' and the Encounter of Art', in Art History/Curating at Goldsmiths College London.