

Art in America

INTERNATIONAL ● REVIEW



View of Kasper Sonne's exhibition, showing (left to right) *Pure Colors (proposal for a flag)*, *Monolith (War and Justice)* and *Temporal Structure*, all 2009; at V1.

COPENHAGEN

KASPER SONNE

V1

Kasper Sonne's recent exhibition in his native Denmark was called "Total Revolution." The New York-based artist showed monochromatic paintings and sculptures that feature sharp binary juxtapositions, which are explicit in his limited palette or implied through his manipulation of source materials and placement of works. The contrasts, which pose subtle questions about truth and authenticity, suggest that the artist perceives black and white as the only genuine options.

Two works each titled *Pure Colors (proposal for a flag)*, 2009, consist of two circular canvases seemingly covered in shades of black industrial paint. From afar the pair look almost identical, but up close it is apparent that both are evenly divided like pie charts, in a configuration suggestive of the nuclear symbol, one accented with deep shades of purple and brown, the other in almost imperceptibly varying dark hues. Whatever is being measured, the canvases seem to assert, the distinction is slight at best. Sonne's "Borderline (new territories)" series also consists of black canvases, these burned until frayed holes formed at their centers, revealing their simple wood stretchers and the white wall behind. Like these works, which intimate danger, a nearby installation of a chain-link fence woven with strings of lightbulbs that form giant X's seduced with its warm glow even as it suggested peril.

In another work, a knee-high stack of white paper bound with thick black plastic packing strips—in the manner of magazines delivered to newsstands and bookstores—is printed with tiny lower-case letters that spell "the total loss of innocence regained." The riddling phrase is compellingly cryptic but conceptually linked to a series of text-on-paper pieces hanging on a nearby wall. There, Sonne has taken 12 perfume ads from mainstream glossy magazines and used acrylic paint to blacken everything but the products' familiar logos. Without contextualizing imagery, words like "eternity," "happy," "escape" and "joy"—concepts that represent the promise of many a revolution—are able to regain the essential meanings that mass-media presentation and commercial associations have appropriated and diluted.

—Ana Finel Honigman