



LOS ANGELES

Dean Levin

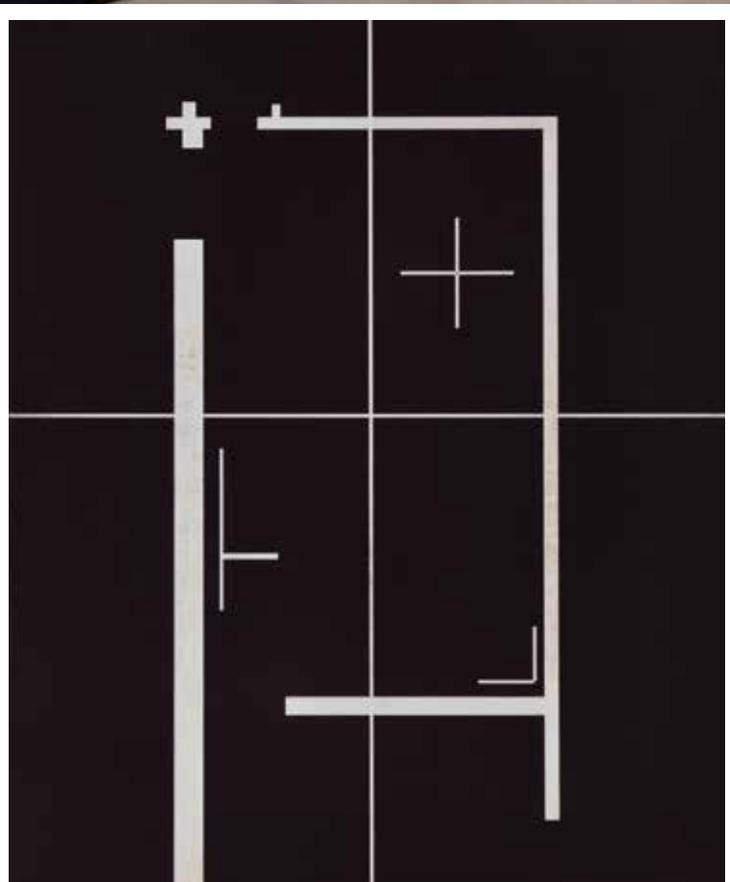
Kohn Gallery // January 16–February 27

IN HIS FIRST EXHIBITION in Los Angeles, Levin's background as a student of architecture comes out in full force. He has previously spoken of his desire to relate his oeuvre to the space in which it is installed, and he accomplishes this here by integrating different bodies of work as the modular components of three abstract, architectural sculptures. These fill the first room of the exhibition, while diagrams of other possible arrangements occupy the second.

We take in each vignette as a proposition for, and about, the interior. While many artists have aspired to directly address the public from within the white cube, Levin investigates the contemporary interior's curious and charged confusion of public and private. His arrangements of monochrome canvases, mirror-polished steel panels printed with grids, and linear wooden sculptures and carpets are not "domestic" so much as caught somewhere between a private apartment and the pseudo-homey interior of a department store or fashion boutique.

Such a nonspace aligns well with the tendency in recent architecture toward curiously absent or empty interiors. For the past 20 years or so, many architects have focused on a building's façade, the interior left a shell that lacks an ergonomics of use. The careful directional orientations and flows sought by modernist architects have been replaced by raucous curves and graded planes, leaving vaulted open spaces that minimize the role of the inhabitant.

Levin is not a cynical artist. His vignettes are not reconstructions of such nonspaces, such as those produced by artists like Gabriel Sierra or Elizabeth Orr, but, rather, allude to them by imagining how we might begin to reorient them. Not quite habitable, Levin's spaces are nonetheless provocative in the way they refigure some of the classic components of a room's design—mirrors, carpets, paintings, etc.—



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ABOVE:
Installation view of, from left, *X*, 2015; *Skin (black)*, 2015; and *Cl*, 2015.

LEFT:
XTC, 2015. Oil on linen, 24 x 18 in.

into machines for perception. His aesthetic is oriented toward engendering a self-reflective awareness of ourselves as sensate, perceiving entities; take, for example, the way that the eye cannot easily perceive the curve of Levin's convex canvases, or the way the grid intervenes in, and consequently shapes, our reflection in his mirror-polished works. By activating the viewer's sensorium, Levin carves out a space for the body within the logic of the contemporary interior. —Alex Bacon