

# ARTFORUM

## Dubai

### **“Black Rainbow”**

CARBON 12 A1 Quoz 1, Street 8, Alserkal Avenue, Warehouse  
D37 January 10–March 10



Rui Chafes, *Inferno XXX*, 2012, steel, 43 x 17 x 6 3/4".

At first glance, “Black Rainbow”—a show confronting the universe of Portuguese sculptor Rui Chafes and of German artist Ralf Ziervogel—seems like a Minimalist affair. Chafes’s sleek black sculptures

parsimoniously dot the space, while Ziervogel's pieces (monochrome, gesso-smearred canvases—*Eskimolied II* and *Eskimolied III*, both 2013) from a distance carry little more than Constructivist-style line clusters. Yet the show revels in a rich materiality. For all their steely elegance, Chafes's works have an alluring rubberlike finish that draws the viewer to the brink of touch. Similarly, a sense of tactility prevails in *Eskimolied (1-6)*, 2013. Increasingly frenetic black-ink finger swipes cover five consecutive iPad-size paper panels, the gestures chronicling a kind of user breakdown resulting in a final "shattered" screen, in which cracks, also rendered in black ink, extend in concentric circles from a central fist print. Pleasantly graphic, palpably material, the work makes physical a moment of madness.

Throughout "Black Rainbow," an almost paradoxical tension between Zen-like Minimalism and up close violence emerges, hinging on our physical engagement with each work. From afar, Chafes's *Dream of Giorgio di Chirico*, 2012, seems unsettling, almost scary: A blossom-like formation of four spoon-shaped petals crown a menacing prong. As viewers move nearer, the soft surface beckons while the sharp edges repel. It is like a highly aestheticized trap, at once tempting and treacherous. Meanwhile, a vortex of violence lurks in Ziervogel's *Eskimolied II* and *Eskimolied III*. Each line in the series' Constructivist clusters is made of minuscule, obsessively executed texts that can only be read with a magnifier. They turn out to be sociopathic rants that bring us screeching back to Ziervogel's previous work: a signature world of flayed figures choreographed in a darkly complex cosmos. What the artist used to show us in imagery, we now have to read. The exercise is excruciating, the effect dizzying.

Sparsely yet masterfully hung to amplify dialogues between the works, "Black Rainbow" is a powerful testament to artistic obsession that ultimately functions like one enormous double take: Can we really trust what we think we see?

— *Kevin Jones*