

Gaia Del Santo
Acme Studios
24.08–12.10.2024

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Acme Studios by Gaia Del Santo comprises two new groups of work: *black essie series (after Frank Stella)* and *amor vacui of meaning*. The exhibition title links the Stockholm-based fashion house Acne Studios with the fictional Looney Tunes company Acme Corporations, whose acronym 'A company making everything' appears as a generic company name in countless cartoons. *black essie series (after Frank Stella)* unfolds in fifty individual titles, listed on the floor plan, which read like abstract narratives. Del Santo's titles for the nail polish bottles – this black shade from Essie is originally called 'licorice' – are a combination of fashion magazine jargon and the scripts of late 1970s and 1980s horror films set in shopping malls. In their minimalist gesture, the works recall Frank Stella's *Black Paintings* (1958–60), which are charged with emotional meaning only through their titles. The second series, titled *amor vacui of meaning*, features seven meticulously arranged collages of grey passepartouts, printed almost invisibly with a fine polka-dot pattern. These unconventionally cut passepartouts refer to common fashion magazine layouts and explore the concept of emptiness and airiness as the epitome of luxury. The images, taken from various contemporary issues of *Vogue* (2023/24), highlight the often-overlooked supporting characters of product marketing used to subliminally convey moods and desires. The following is a text contribution to the exhibition by Biz Sherbert.

Hitting Pan

Biz Sherbert

My favorite eyeshadow is inside a palette made by a company that doesn't exist anymore. Two of the nine eyeshadows have fallen out, the other six are pockmarked by brushes and accidents and the powder of the last one, my favorite, has been tunneled down to show a splotch of shiny metal beneath it. There's a good term for this: *hitting pan* — using enough of a makeup product that the finger, brush or sponge in use makes contact with the metal pan of its packaging. It's a phrase with motion to it, like hitting the gas, hitting rock bottom or hitting a goal. This goes with how it's often used as the goal of a challenge, first created by beauty bloggers and YouTubers some time between the late 2000s and the 2010s, to actually use up the makeup products you own instead of buying new ones.

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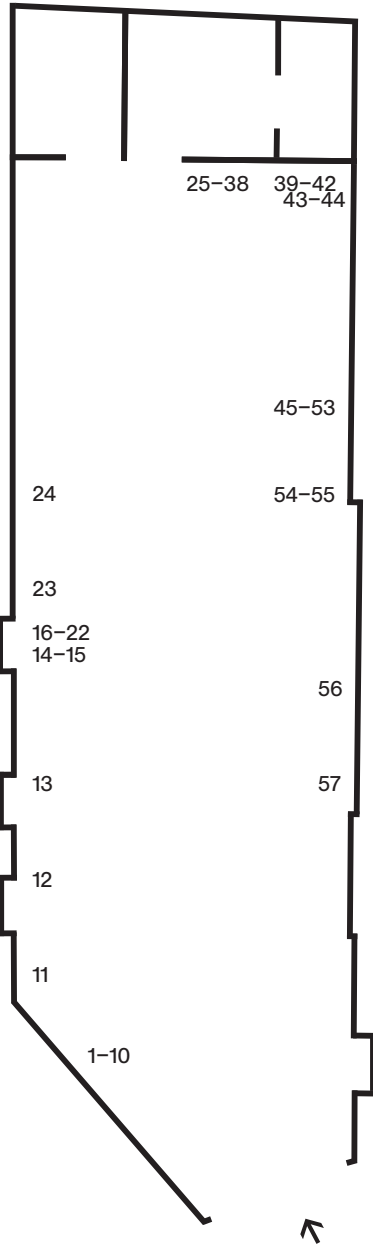
On r/MakeupRehab, an online community that describes itself as a support group for the makeup obsessed, hitting pan is both a practical and philosophical matter. Guilt is a common motivator, whether it's regret over unnecessary spending or wasted environmental resources used to make a product. One makeup-rehabber says that for them it's about the "weird tingly satisfaction" they get from "people living simply and getting full utility from their things." r/PanPorn is dedicated to a similar feeling, with "hall of fame" posts showing pans with little or no trace of cosmetics. Whether fully "panned" or still in progress, the products take on an archaeological quality, with labels rubbed out by wear, residue settled like sediment and powders and creams eroded and terraformed by habitual human use.

Members of these groups share their journeys to hitting pan. It can take years of dedicated use, because unlike clothes there is no simple, sanctioned way of getting rid of make-up you don't need or want — there is no charity shop drop-off for gently used blush. Strategy and the math of hitting pan is discussed, with references to approach, models and percentages. Panned eyeshadow palettes are considered the highest achievement ("panning eyeshadows is more of a theory than reality," muses one member), with the archetypal hall of fame pan being an Urban Decay Naked palette or an Anastasia Beverly Hills Modern Renaissance palette, bled of contents. The former, a dozen neutral shimmers with names like Virgin, Sin and Creep, released in 2010 to enormous commercial success and cultural impact.

On the blogging platform Tumblr, I loved coming across scans of eyeshadows with names like these printed below them. A sparkly grey was called Night Fairy, which was exactly what it was and probably what I wanted to be. Looking back, it appears many of these names were edited. One "palette" showed Night Fairy next to shades Cocaine (moon crater silver), Night Snow (the exact same as Cocaine), Intertwined (the exact same as Night Fairy), Moonshine (face paint silver) and Tibet (safe silver). The eyeshadows were always by Nars (you could tell by the Helvetica type), a brand known for its suggestive product names like the blush called Orgasm, so the fictive names were likely creative interpretations, conscious or not, of that well-laid brand architecture. I don't remember being bothered by the inconsistencies.

Biz Sherbert is an American writer and critic with an interest in style, identity and the internet.

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- 1–10 *i-catching, fashion victim, gluttony, yes, melodrama amex, decorum, commerce kiss, focus group, habit, noone*
- 11 *amor vacui of meaning 1*
- 12 *amor vacui of meaning 2*
- 13 *amor vacui of meaning 3*
- 14–15 *anno design, for you*
- 16–22 *too faced, word on the street, everyone, reference, plaza envy, matter of fiction, accessory*
- 23 *amor vacui of meaning 4*
- 24 *amor vacui of meaning 5*
- 25–38 *think, immateriality, basic instinct, mystery shopper, surface over source, influencer lament, deer in headlights, creative director, losing face, conspiracy, signifying minimalism, nothing, overchoice tragedy, abyss flirt*
- 39–42 *perfume ad thriller, kerosene, jane doe, protocol*
- 43–44 *fear of god, cosmetic debt*
- 45–53 *hey authentic, tactical refusal, missing verbs, retinal spam, makeshift, trust factor, value, machinery, incubo*
- 54–55 *roland barthes, oh heart*
- 56 *amor vacui of meaning 6*
- 57 *amor vacui of meaning 7*

amor vacui of meaning 1–7, 2024
 Magazine cutouts, screen print on passepartout, framed
 42 x 29.7cm

black essie series (after Frank Stella), 2024
 50 Essie nail polishes with individual titles
 Dimensions variable

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