Ron Terada: *TL;DR*

Clint Burnham

Ron Terada, *Instagram Will Begin Blurring 'Sensitive' Posts Before You Can View Them, March 23rd 2017, 10:23 am, 2017*. Acrylic on canvas, 76 x 61 cm. Courtesy of Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver. Photo: SITE Photography.

Ron Terada's new exhibition takes up two central components from his practice of the past twenty-plus years: painting text on otherwise monochromatic canvases, and appropriating commercial signage as sculptural gestures. Like other second-generation "Vancouver School" artists with whom he is often grouped, both critically and in exhibitions (Steven Shearer, Geoffrey Farmer, Myfanwy McLeod, Tim Lee, Kelly Wood, Brian Jungen), Terada makes work that departs from the dour materialist critique to be found in the first generation (Stan Douglas, Ian Wallace, Ken Lum, Jeff Wall, Rodney Graham). Here, for example, on one wall of the gallery are 26 white paintings, of various sizes and tightly arranged like tiles. The paintings all purport to be headlines from the website *The Verge*, and thus instantiate the exhibition's title, *TL; DR*, which, in Internet vernacular, is a shorthand way of indicating an article was too long and so one did not read it. That is to say, Terada's title is a symptom of our age of digital distraction and short attention spans.

The paintings refer to headlines also called "clickbait" because of how they try to grab a reader, compel her to click on the link, thereby monetizing hyperbole and superficial, if not probably fictitious,

scandal. Ranging from the banal narcissism of social media (such as *Instagram Will Begin Blurring 'Sensitive' Posts Before You Can View Them, 23 March 2017, 10:23 a.m.*, 2017) to au courant anxieties about technology and politics (such as *A US Ally Shot Down a $200 Drone With a $3 Million Patriot Missile, 17 March 2017, 10:13 a.m.*, 2017)—the paintings' titles are also their messages, along with, presumably, a timestamp for when the headline appeared on the website. A crucial difference, however, is that while *The Verge* uses Adelle and FF DIN for its headlines, Terada has chosen a more bespoke font, Cheltenham (used by *The New York Times* and LL Bean, the gallery pamphlet tells us, also adding that *The Verge*'s font "is terrible").

Terada has been making text paintings for better than two decades: early works I saw of his in the 1990s included paintings of high school yearbook quotes (his *Untitled (Grey Painting)* series from 1996-1997) and the questions-as-answers from the TV gameshow *Jeopardy* (the *Untitled (Jeopardy Painting)* series from 1997). In all of these works, including the paintings in the present exhibition, Terada combines the highest level of painterly attention – where text is now the matter