

KYLE THURMAN, ISRAEL LUND, JEAN-BAPTISTE BERNADET, JOSH SMITH

Opening April 6th 2013
4 pm - 9 pm

« Art is everyone's and it sits there for contemplation and any other possible use, by all and among them, the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. » John Armleder

4 artists expose 11 paintings within the 4 walls of the gallery. Three of them are from New York, the other one, French, spent there a period of his life. What is the influence the East-coast metropolis (with its lifestyle and history, its changing sky, dirty streets, the colours and materials of its buildings) had on these artists? Only the paintings gathered in this exhibition – minimalist and *brut*, gestural and mute, hesitant and incisive – can enlighten us. The artists share an interest for formalism and materials, and this selection reflects affinities and metonymical connections that link their research. They work on series to pursue uniqueness (« Isn't life a series of images that change as they repeat themselves? » Andy Warhol); distrusting though all virtuosity, mysticism and idealism that surround abstract painting or the heroism of self-expression.

Kyle Thurman works with daisies found in New York delis. His paintings are titled according to the address where the flowers were purchased. He obtains a red pigment by boiling some of them and uses some others as a stencil, « creating a figure-ground pattern of pinkish-red tones and raw canvas. » This floral pattern extends over the edges of the canvas, « alluding to the idea of an industrially-produced textile. » Kyle is interested by « the tension and harmony that is created by using the primitive technique of pigment-making to recycle an artificial dye and then compose a painting that has the illusion of mass-produced fabric. These paintings simultaneously attempt to engage with the history of abstraction, material-based painting, land and pop art. » This inclusion of nature reminds that « there is no escaping nature through abstract representation; abstraction brings one closer to physical structures within nature itself » (Robert Smithson).

Israel Lund's paintings are silkscreen printings on canvas, in the standard format of 11 x 8,5 in. With a squeegee he spreads cyan, magenta and yellow ink on the silk-screen. He tries « to make a monochrome painting where every part of the canvas is covered, but the texture of the canvas resists a perfect covering of ink. The canvas weave make the image. » The amount of ink used and the pressure of the squeegee on the canvas produce these paints, which operate « as a photocopy on a piece of paper because of its image, as a painting because it is on a canvas substrate, and also within a discourse of printmaking because of the process of its making. » Could this be a paradigm of painting?

In order to stop throwing his paddles (« this ephemeral disposable by-products of painting ») Josh Smith uses canvases as containers for colour, transforming them into «palette paintings» or «brush-cleaning paintings»: « I'll have an empty canvas, and if I have a brush that's loaded, I'll just put it on there and use it. Of course I'm not going to waste it. If a quarterback has a chance to throw the ball down the field, he should throw it. » Is this the dawn of an abstraction? A caricature of it? Is there something libidinal in the loaded brush that rubs and wipes on a white canvas?

Jean-Baptiste Bernadet lays a multitude of unstable, hesitant and sincere gestures to create his paintings, covering the canvas with blended colours: « These gestures are anything but expressive, they are evocation, speed. Touch and chromatic scale could make us think of enlarged details of Impressionist paintings, which in turn borrowed some of their colours (pink, yellow) from Venetian painting (Titian, Tintoretto). » The last layer is made of glass beads, a material used for road marking or for shuffleboards, which makes the previous colour layers look « a little blurry, but also more brilliant and brighter ». This layer of glass beads flattens the pictorial surface, contradicting the three-dimensional touch. In this sense they are almost images of painting more than paintings. In any case, they play on this ambiguity. The expressivity of gesture is then « more or less hidden behind a foggy aspect, or behind a last layer that contradicts the previous layers, so that these gestures were duplicated or they became impossible to distinguish from the background. » Shall we consider them concrete paintings?

Each work has its own rhetoric, each artist develops a language carrying meaning and desire. All means seem good to make a painting, and this brings things back to what they are.

Timothée Chaillou

Timothée Chaillou is independent curator and critic born in the 80's. He studied history of art, philosophy of art and aesthetic of cinema. His recent projects include *Seuls quelques fragments de nous toucheront quelques fragments d'autrui* at Thaddaeus Ropac Gallery in Paris and *Fragrance* in Garagisme magazine issue 3.