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News

NEW YORK – HENNING STRASSBURGER: “FÜNF BILDER” AT ROBERT BLUMENTHAL THROUGH MAY 10TH, 2018

May 9th, 2018

For the past five years, collector Robert Blumenthal has been wading deeper and deeper into the world of exhibition-making, mounting shows with a flair for the adventurous and the scholarly in his gallery that has moved from the Upper East Side and the Hamptons to Chinatown. Having embraced a collecting style that pairs conceptually ambitious work with more classical approaches towards lyrical and figurative painting, Blumenthal's shows have been a distinct analog to his own collection, which features work by Darren Bader, Isa Genzken, Chris Burden, and Mary Weatherford, among others.

Now, Blumenthal Gallery has popped up yet again, this time at 75 Bowery with his most recent gallery venture, one that will look to have staying power in a burgeoning network of downtown exhibition spaces. Just a few doors down from Bridget Donahue, the gallery's position and curatorial focus makes it an intriguing addition to New York's LES and Chinatown art scene, a neighborhood intimately connected with the artists living and working there. “My mission is to help up-and-coming artists build their careers,” Blumenthal says of the space, describing a vision that encourages the development and encouragement of young talent and new ideas, “I want my gallery to function as an incubator for new artist projects.” True to form, Blumenthal has already made a splash on the Bowery with his recent billboard project, installing works by Maggie Lee and Sayre Gomez atop his building. For his current show in the gallery proper, Blumenthal has tapped Berlin-ba-



Henning Strassburger, The Big Air Conditioner (2018)

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sed painter Henning Strassburger, an artist who sits at perhaps the most concise juncture of the collector's interests. A former student of German painter Albert Oehlen, Strassburger's work is a conceptual exercise in the construction, and perhaps even the deconstruction, of the canvas space. His modes of mark-making, incorporating fluid strokes of texture, and thin washes of paint turn the canvas from a frame for exploring totalities into a space for the accumulation and reflection on the mark itself.

A distinct sense of detached coolness permeates the work on view here, a feeling of almost effortless movement across the picture plane, twisted and repeated over and again until a work emerges from the dense interaction of movements and pieces. Blumenthal describes the work as musical: "While the group as a whole has a sense of consistency each work seems to be expressive of a different musical genre. There is a lot of energy and spontaneity to them." Yet his work could equally function in the sense of a notation of sorts, a detached arrangement of movements and marks that recall a musical score, a movement up and down the staff that brings a sense of composition itself, albeit in a more painterly sense of the word, to the pieces. Perhaps the works themselves could even be described as a sort of three-dimensional counterpoint, mixing bands of color and negative space with the opposition of black lines and background nearby.

Reading into Strassburger's paintings, the motion between the lines takes on an increasingly prominent role. Leaving it up to the viewer to read space as a constantly shifting series of relations, one finds Strassburger at his strongest here, and finds Blumenthal showing why his presence has already left its mark on downtown's current gallery scene.

— D. Creahan



Henning Strassburger, Dollar Sponge (2018)



Henning Strassburger, Air Conditioner 2 (2018)