

Lush Strokes, Phantom Forms

Curator: Pujan Gandhi

Artists: Matthias Bitzer, Andreas Eriksson, Secundino Hernández, Rachel Howard, Paul Fägerskiöld, Wolfgang Tillmans

If we operate under the premise that the role of artist is to give spirit form, it goes without saying that abstraction and representation are simultaneous aesthetic and emotional concerns. It's the power—and process—of apprehending allusion that enraptures us most.

Lush Strokes, Phantom Forms features six contemporary artists, operating across the globe, whose selected works typify Robert Rauschenberg's prophetic (yet intuitive) assertion: "Abstract Painting is just beginning...All Possibilities are open to it."¹ While the dawn of a categorically 'abstract' art in the Western canon is most attributed to post-war Abstract Expressionists, who often probed heroic and existential quests, today, it could be argued that artists working in this vein are more so looking towards the viewer, testing boundaries by honing individual processes that privilege our mutable perceptions. In an era characterized by multiple simultaneities and constant shifts, this exhibition revels in the complex ways 'painting' and 'abstraction' have proven infinitely absorbent, still transcendent, vehicles of expression.

Rachel Howard (b. UK, 1969) creates paintings which flow from corporeal experiences, where atomized and patterned pigment transforms from the inchoate to the intensely profound: death, love, violence, and the otherworldly are felt in ways that unleash and affirm the power of her medium. Taking a more analytic yet no less human approach to his practice, **Secundino Hernández** (b. Spain, 1975) deftly reveals the tensions inherent in building a painting. In some canvases, the basic elements of line, composition, colour, plane, process, and image pirouette in space; in other moments, these elements aggregate until reborn, appearing again as fresh pigment on an artists' palette.

Residing on the banks of Lake Vänern in rural Sweden, **Andreas Eriksson** (b.1975, Sweden) gently reminds us of painting's function as a window, capturing the totality of light and space. His personal responses to the transience of natural phenomena are recorded into a layered patchwork of brush strokes and color, making for a topographical vista on the history of painting, evoking a tapestry of essential experiences. Further realizing painting's potential as an observational tool, **Paul Fägerskiöld** (b.1982, Sweden) employs a slightly more structured logic. He accumulates particular matter (i.e. a fleck of paint) into a suspended "constructed image," which "floats" as if the work is a screen capturing an image of itself. The result offers an alluring sensory stasis in which form and formlessness thusly co-exist.

Matthias Bitzer (b. 1975, Germany) expands the field of process-based abstraction into three-dimensions, creating an integrated, multi-media body of work which explores physical, perceptual, and intellectual dislocation. He mines an array of imagery and ideas, compresses the notion of linearity and reconstructs a rich new realm of phenomenological perceptions. Finally, **Wolfgang Tillmans** (b.1968,

Germany) is a master photographer whose lens captures visceral flashes of collective familiarity. Whether producing elegiac, representational images or photographs that verge on the genre of painterly abstraction, Tillmans' work ushers a moment of surrender. As subtle suggestions emerge, so too does the cyclical nature of time.

Beyond offering a glimpse onto the selected artists' respective agencies, *Lush Strokes, Phantom Forms* celebrates the boundless possibility of a contemporary mode abstraction that is neither abrasive nor sedentary. With work that is sublime in spirit yet objective in its execution, it will be left to the viewer to pause and conjure his or her own desire for form.