

Lyles & King

Max Frintrop

Daily Bread

May 1 - June 5, 2016

Opening Reception: Sunday, May 1, 6-8pm

Lyles & King is proud to announce its first solo exhibition of new painting by Max Frintrop. This will be Max Frintrop's first exhibition with the gallery.

Max Frintrop is an artist who prizes the act of making a painting. He does so in almost an old fashioned way that I find is actually pretty rare today, given the number of "paintings" that purportedly surround us. He values a close and informed involvement with painterly materials and ways of working that transcend any investment in a specific process, which—for Frintrop—must always be in the service of an aesthetic experience which is not simply reducible to any of the labor invested or materials used.

Lately Frintrop has been pushing the quality of liquidity inherent in his use of ink as his medium of choice. The resulting works are simultaneously pared down (without being reductive) and more spatial, in a pictorial sense. In some paintings forms tumble over one another, and rush towards the viewer, while in others a built up assemblage of marks are threatened by an aqueous shimmering that dissolves the legibility of its structure. In still other paintings a tight grouping of marks surge in a particular direction, upwards, and to left, right, or center. At times they even collide, causing a spectacular pictorial event to unfold near the center of the canvas.

One of the biggest misinterpretations currently circulating is that all paintings come from a similar place and history, implicitly imagined as ahistorical and placeless, determined by the possibilities that have been eked out of paint-on-canvas for centuries. This ignores that many artists today use painting as a frame for all sorts of concerns, extending far beyond the traditional pictorial ones, as well as the more recent anti-pictorial ones. They are neither trying to expand the legacy of modernism, nor the realm of the painterly outside of the rectilinear, wall-bound object; making sense of this feels like one of the major tasks facing criticism today, mine at least.

Needless to say, however, this only makes it more evident, by means of contrast, that Frintrop is actually working out of a painterly legacy, in particular that of Abstract Expressionism. Yet this is an Abstract Expressionism filtered through a German tradition, where gesture, let alone painting as a medium, did not go through the same denigration and reorientation in the 1950s and 60s. In a certain way, without knowing exactly why (I am perhaps too Ameri-centric in my education and references), gesture in German art never seemed to have quite the same role that it played in America, and even other parts of Europe, especially France—both of which wholeheartedly responded to a tortured existentialism.

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Painting's high status has always been safeguarded in Germany, even as it was never invaded by the same fad for the action painter. Hans Hartung, not an irrelevant artist to mention in this context, may have been born in Leipzig, but he found his success in Paris. Like Hartung, Frintrop turns gesture into order, with both artists' forms coalescing into complex felt geometries that create circuits of energy that pulse in currents that flow around the picture plane.

Text by Alex Bacon

Max Frintrop (b. 1982, Oberhausen, Germany) lives and works in Düsseldorf, Germany. He received his Master's Degree from the Kunstakademie in Düsseldorf in 2009. Solo exhibitions include "You should be here" at Andersen's Contemporary (Copenhagen, Denmark); "Leverage" at Berthold Pott (Cologne, Germany). Group exhibitions include "Formen der Abstraktion" at Galerie Ludorff (Düsseldorf, Germany); "Person, Place or Thing" at 68 Projects (Berlin, Germany); "L'Avventura / die wit der Liebe spielen" at Palazzo Guaineri delle Cosier (Brescia, Italy); and "Nowhere" at Babette (Berlin, Germany).