

# rachel uffner

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance: *post paintings*

April 3 – May 15, 2016

Opening Reception: Sunday, April 3, 2016, 6 – 8 pm

At first glance, *post paintings* might seem like an incredibly pretentious name for an exhibition—the kind you roll your eyes at and think, “Jesus, *another* show about painting.” Well, I’d say it’s not really what you think. Like any decent show about the medium, Strauss’ title is kind of a gag. It’s both about painting and everything painting is not—the catch being the two are always dialectically tethered, in good, postmodern fashion (Derrida in “The Parergon”: “The incomprehensibility of [a] border”). Note how there’s no dash between *post* and *painting*, because these “paintings” are literally posts (so many tongues and cheeks here). They’re made of 2” x 2” basswood sections, stacked and latticed in varying configurations. They’re similar to the basswood maquettes in his T293 show, *USA Objects*, and may seem rather *dissimilar* from his earlier Rachel Uffner outing, with its shiny, laminate surfaces and striped carpeting. But each offers a different, material way to “arrange” a painting, whatever painting means.

In *post paintings*, many of Strauss’ wood strips are also wrapped in pages of the *New York Post*—another nod to posts here—but it’s not so apparent. The paper has been scribbled over in acrylic marker, oil stick, and wood stain, and thus—to me at least—looks rather abstract expressionist, like something out of *Mad Men*—Helen Frankenthaler or Cy Twombly, if they only painted their frames, bones making a body. Is it without organs? They don’t seem to follow any order.

The body is everywhere here, though it’s only elliptically addressed. In the collaged groupings, the *Post*’s pages have been almost entirely covered in various shades of color, save for bits of clothes, hands, torsos, and garbled headlines left exposed—we don’t know whose or which, really. It doesn’t matter. It’s all vaguely sexual and homoerotic, these anonymous bodies and hands, caught in the act of reaching or touching. The adjacent cigarettes are sexualized too, in their own way; they’re images made into form, with trails of basswood geometrically turning this way and that, like erratic smoke lines from a twitchy hand, moving to a mouth and back. Maybe it’s James Dean’s—denim-clad-iconic, carton rolled up his sleeve—his lips pursed with a fag. Gay gay gay.

Strauss has been making these weird, squared cigarettes since forever it seems, at least since *like flex / like flex* at Bodega, back in 2010. It’s ironic, since he no longer smokes; he quit when he went to Skowhegan as a way of “starting over,” he told me in his studio, as if he’d become too synonymous with the act. Well—*newsflash*—he still is, but he considers cigarettes more as a way of marking time making, of taking breaks, of thinking through self-representation. Smoking is, even still, an identity-marker, a symbol for cinematic machismo, for doing something *bad*. Ironically, Strauss and I both have mothers who smoked in the car and *only* in the car. That’s so open-road, so American.

And *post paintings*, is if anything, very Americana, with its references to craft, collage and construction—model boats, buoys, things like that. Strauss grew up in rural Maine after all, surrounded by them. His father painted signs and made furniture for a living, and his mother—when she wasn’t lighting up—made *trompe-l’œil* paintings of things like Grecian vases. So painting is in Strauss’ very fiber, even if he doesn’t necessarily want it to be, in the brush-



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and-paint sense. But it's more painting-as-collage, or painting-as-sculpture, or painting-in-the-expanded-field (hey Rosalind Krauss), or image-as-object, object-as-symbol. The iterations are endless and fluid. As I'm writing this, who knows what the show will actually become once he gets in the space, as the space can change everything on a dime. But what does it matter, when everything is, in a way, so interchangeable?

*Text by David Everitt Howe, 2016*

**Strauss Bourque-LaFrance** b. 1983, lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. This is his second solo show at Rachel Uffner Gallery. Recent exhibitions include a solo exhibition at T293, Rome, IT, *Dance and Process*, The Kitchen, New York, NY, *A Peg to Hang in On*, White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO, and a two-person exhibition at Exo, Exo in Paris, FR. He has also been included in exhibitions at ICA, Philadelphia, PA and SculptureCenter, Long Island City, NY, among many others. He received his BFA from Hampshire College, Amherst, MA; and his MFA from the Tyler School of Art, Philadelphia, PA.

Image:

Strauss Bourque-LaFrance, *Bonnet for the Best Shaker*, 2016, basswood, stain, acrylic, oil stick, wax, New York Post, 34 x 20 x 2 inches (86.4 x 50.8 x 5.1 cm)

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