

rachel uffner

JAMES HARRIS GALLERY



One Foot on the Ground
July 2 - August 15, 2015

Opening Reception: Thursday, July 2nd, 6pm - 8pm

James Harris Gallery is pleased to present a group show of paintings and works on paper entitled, *One Foot on the Ground*, curated by artist Alexander Kroll. The show presents recent work by six American painters including Tomory Dodge, Joanne Greenbaum, Jane Hugentober, Tom Knechtel, Erin Morrison, and Craig Taylor. This exhibition attempts to demonstrate how both established and emerging artists approach the constructs of image making. The title infers the threshold that exists between figuration and abstraction, and how these boundaries are pushed in order to discover what lies just beyond the recognizable. As Dodge suggests, the work becomes about “the representation of gesture,” the in-between state where a picture pushes against the edge of physicality and challenges the observer’s perceptions. It is in this moment of falling off balance, of allowing for chaos to ensue, that these artists discover the associative domains beyond the visual arts through performance, poetry, fairytales, psychology, archeology, diagrams, and topography - and create their own language of abstraction through suspension and dislocation of form. For this exhibition, painting is the primary means to creation of these signature abstract languages, however many of these artists have incorporated mixed media into their practice. For Joanne Greenbaum and Tom Knechtel drawing has become an unavoidable conduit to their gestural mark. Greenbaum has only merged her personal practice of drawing with painting more recently, as part of her evolution towards the unfiltered abstract gesture. Knechtel often works from drawing into painting, finding synergy between the two. For both of these artists, this intersection of drawing and painting suggests the relationship between the public life of the artist and the private life in the studio. In this sense, their intimate discoveries of the small gesture of the hand are monumentalized through the expressive nature of painting and brought to a wider audience.

Also included in this exhibition are emerging artists Jane Hugentober and Erin Morrison, who renegotiate the confines of a painterly space through their experimental approaches to the support structures of their work. Morrison creates her own “blank canvas” through her plaster reliefs of palm leaves, an iconic symbol of Los Angeles topography. The tactile surfaces of her

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paintings are instilled with cultural implications that both inform and disrupt the painted marks. Jane Hungentober abandons the support structure all together, stretching and draping her materials and allowing her pieces to exist in an experiential environment. This “play space” of her work is an embodiment of artistic experience, a layered narrative of the physical performance of creation. Hungentober refers to as “play processes” that relate to her own complex sense of identity and true self.

Perhaps the most painterly and abstract pieces in the exhibition are the works by Tomory Dodge. Earlier in his career, Dodge used photographs as the source for his paintings, but this mediation has dropped away from his practice, and his focus on the gesture as subject matter has freed his work from the referential in order to demonstrate the relationship between painting and his performative process. The many layers of marks of this intentional chaos have a powerful affect, seductive in their physicality.

In line with this performative vein to abstract mark making, Tom Knechtel likens his work to the theatre when he describes it as “based on an interaction between the desire to suspend disbelief, the need to communicate and how impermanent that transaction is.” The works in this exhibition become a stage, a theatrical space for the artist to act upon and for the viewer to both experience and contemplate, perhaps with one foot on the ground.