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Garth Weiser
January 28 - March 6, 2021
Press Release

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Garth Weiser, the artist's eighth solo presentation with the gallery. In these new artworks, Weiser amplifies the visual lexicon of his predominately abstract oeuvre by revealing elements of representation within his dense, layered paintings. Expanding upon a unique process whereby divergent compositions are superimposed on a single canvas, Weiser has for the first time turned to appropriated imagery as primary source material.

To produce the paintings, Weiser selects images intuitively from a variety of platforms, moving fluidly across niche social-media forums, Fanart blogs, gaming channels, and e-commerce sites. Digital media is modified, manipulated and integrated within the textured topography of Weiser's oil canvases. Each painting surface is built with contrasting layers of thick impasto, weaving virtual figuration and abstract forms until multiple intersecting patterns emerge. The content of the appropriated imagery ranges from emblematic and provocative to bizarre and banal. Video game avatars and subcultural band mascots fuse with stock graphics, CAD vectors, and textural renderings that are selected primarily for their formal and tactile qualities. The resulting paintings display an acute somatic awareness imbued with a technocratic tilt. Human forms, fossilized within striations of oil paint, adopt bionic qualities that blur the boundaries between animal and machine. The repetition of spiral extremities, as seen in "love" (2020) and "international center of photography" (2020), recalls both human viscera and the futuristic tentacles of a technologically advanced being. Other works unearth monstrous figures lurking behind layers of paint alongside glimpses of biomorphic grotesquerie. These paintings become reminiscent of the visual language employed by late medieval and early Renaissance artists including Hieronymus Bosch, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and Goya. At the same time, Weiser engages with the formalism of Color Field Painting and Geometric Abstraction and the rough materiality of Neo-Expressionism. By accessing a multitude of art-historical references, Weiser harnesses the expressive power of the grotesque through both representational and material means.

As Weiser builds each canvas, the representational imagery erodes within its abstract overlay. The legibility of competing figures vacillates recalling philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's writings on 'aspect perception,' whereby a single image or object can contain two distinct representations - both of which can be seen, but not simultaneously. This flickering of perception is akin to the altered waves of an interference pattern, as seen in lenticular printing and holography. The paintings are scarred with claw-like lacerations that further complicate the intertwined patterns. Weiser applies thin strips of tape over his compositions as he works, forming indentations within the thick oil paint upon removal. Additional cavities are created by cutting away exterior paint layers with a utility knife, revealing pops of color or glimpses of the printed imagery underneath. This removal process becomes a painterly gesture in and of itself, while also lending a sculptural quality to the canvases.

Both alien and inexplicably familiar, Weiser's new paintings speak to a collective subconscious permeated by anxiety, dissociation, absolutist thinking, social isolation, sanctimony, and escapism. These evocations are perhaps best illustrated by the recurring "2020" that appears in balloon font across multiple compositions. This number, once neutral, is now a Pavlovian trigger, provoking an immediate emotive response that exemplifies the reactionary nature of our contemporary moment. Contained within a complex web of illusory patterns, the paintings typify the social entanglement that distorts perspective and disrupts our ability to see things objectively, as they truly are.