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David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by Markus Amm, its third with the artist since 2006 and his first in the United States since 2011. The ravishing fields of color that appear in Amm's gesso board paintings, which will constitute the entirety of this exhibition, represent one of the most sustained and sensuous bodies of work being made by a contemporary European artist. Created by infrequently pouring extremely thin layers of paint onto a prepared surface over long periods of time, the small-scale gesso boards reveal radiant compositions that develop and deepen before the viewer's gaze.

Markus Amm is part of a generation of European painters whose work first came to wider attention in the landmark 2004 Kunstverein in Hamburg exhibition Formalismus, and who began to reconsider art's process-based potential in the wake of conceptualism. Over the last 15 years Amm has steadily produced several bodies of painting and photography remarkable for their subtlety and openness. While made in a variety of different ways, taken together these typologies serve as a laboratory in which Amm experiments both with the material "fixing" of an image and the extremes of freedom and control. He is also concerned with duration, remaining acutely aware of the time--and the different kinds of time--it takes to render a finished work. The gesso boards represent Amm's most distilled exploration of these themes.

Each begins with the preparation of the painting surface, which itself requires the application of numerous layers of medium in order to achieve the characteristically smooth, matte, and tactile finish that becomes a foundation for the subsequent composition. With the board laid flat on the floor, Amm then begins pouring paint, beginning the composition with a basic guiding idea (a particular shape or combination of colors, for instance), and allowing medium to flow over the panel's sides. This brief period of action precedes an extended period of observation, one that can last anywhere from days to years, during which the paint dries and the next move is considered.

While ostensibly more passive, this contemplative stage plays an equally crucial role in the development of the work. It is here that Amm can reflect on the results of a process that only allows him a modicum of control; poured paint moves unpredictably, and different pigments react to one another in unexpected ways. Eventually the original idea that

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generated his first decisions falls by the wayside as the painting asserts its own character. Amm then begins to respond to the emerging composition, sanding it down in places and occasionally intervening more dramatically with a brushstroke or other discrete gesture. These minor disruptions on an otherwise pristine surface only serve to heighten the painting's mystery, prompting questions about its construction and the nature of its status as an object in the world.

As Amm has patiently cultivated this visual and material syntax over the years, he has been able to further capitalize on an increasingly intuitive familiarity with its terms and contradictions. The newest works therefore possess a highly complex sense of depth, particularly in the shifts between colors, that distinguishes them from their recent predecessors. Tracing the archaeology of the paintings in the sculptural formations that accrue on their edges creates a dynamic contrast between the illusionistic interior spaces opened up within the compositions and the frank materiality of the gesso boards as objects hanging on the wall.

This constellation of effects accounts for the impact Amm achieves in relatively contained formats. And it is in this relationship to scale that his unique and nuanced position vis-à-vis art historical precedents is made apparent. While 20th century experiments with the effects of pure color--particularly Color Field painting and abstract expressionism--often relied upon immersive force and the use of large canvases to envelop the viewer's entire body, Amm's work elicits sustained acts of seeing and a more consciously analytical stance. The viewer's awareness is simultaneously drawn to the diaphanous, imaginative world inside the painting and the palpably physical one that surrounds it. Such friction generates an intimate sublimity whose roots go as far back as the Romantic artistic and literary movements of the 18th and 19th centuries. Amm focuses the emotional power of color and spatial depth with meditative concentration and sensory precision, so that his art functions as a pointed counter to the disembodiment and speed that permeate our contemporary moment.

Markus Amm (b. 1967, Stuttgart, Germany) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at Kunsthau Baselland, Basel, Switzerland (2017) and Kunstmuseum Stuttgart (2010). His work has been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including Variations: Conversations in And Around

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Abstract Painting, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (2014); Die Geometrie der Dinger, GAK Gesellschaft für Aktuelle Kunst, Bremen, Germany (2013); Only here: The Federal Republic of Germany's Contemporary Art Collection Acquisitions from 2007 to 2011, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, Germany (2013); Actual Fact / Factual Fact, Märkisches Museum Witten, Germany (2011); Neuer Konstruktivismus, Bielefelder Kunstverein, Museum Waldhof, Germany (2007); Dereconstruction, Gladstone Gallery, New York (2006); and Formalismus, Kunstverein in Hamburg, Germany (2004). Amm lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland.

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