

Jonathan Horowitz

Leftover Paint Abstractions

8 March

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Press Release

The New York-based artist Jonathan Horowitz makes art that reflects upon art itself: his works dismantle the (pop) cultural idioms they critique, from within, resulting in complex layers of meaning. Humour and political commentary are constants in the multi-narratives he generates. His second solo exhibition at Xavier Hufkens features a group of *Leftover Paint Abstractions*, a new series made with leftover paint given to him by fellow artists. Works recalling earlier series are also included in the show, a contrast that brings Horowitz's conceptual and formal versatility into clear view.

The *Leftover Paint Abstractions* are made by flicking drops of paint onto raw, stretched linen canvas. In each work colour is the conspicuous element: when seen up-close, the details of drops can be seen, and the colour interaction is vibrant; when viewed from afar the drops of paint blend into fields of colour thanks to optical mixing. The splatters look randomly distributed, yet every painting attests to a breadth of decision-making that the artist engaged in. Movement and gravity can be sensed, too, but differently than in the work of Jackson Pollock—an instant art historical association. Pollock's work was floor-based; he lopped the paint splatters downwards, as he moved his body around the canvas. Jonathan Horowitz considers his paintings to be like mirrors, putting them upright, against the wall. He laterally flicks the paint onto the canvas. Now and then he rotates the painting. Some splatters drip downwards, lending the paintings a multi-directional drift. Horowitz thus literally tilts up a ubiquitous modernist reference, if not any laws of physics.

The issue of recycling is put at the centre of the room in the functional, readymade recycling sculpture that Horowitz made with a reproduction Eileen Gray side table and a clear plastic bag. Again, the artist directs the perspective in a new direction. The recycled element is placed in central view as part of an object of value. The side table further interests the artist as one of the few icons of modern design made by a woman.

The notion of recycling—with its urgent, political implications—is pertinent in the *Leftover Paint Abstractions*, too, but their inherent protest is indirect. The visual override the paintings provide instead allows the viewer a kind of abstracted solace. As Joshua Decker writes in his essay in the exhibition's catalogue: "In today's world, losing oneself in a painting might be a restorative experience. Losing oneself in a painting might even be a metapolitical act of defiance these days." And, as the artist says in the interview with Simon Castets, the experience of viewing the paintings can be curiously intimate: "The effect is like a physiological transference of my subjectivity to the viewer."

Jonathan Horowitz has previously used the logos of Pepsi and Coca Cola cans as a vehicle to discuss the binary system of U.S. politics; the Democrats use blue as their party colour, and the Republicans identify with red. On election night the map of the United States fills up as the results come in, state per state, with either colour. Horowitz commented on the binary system by making large formal abstractions using the two soda can motifs for colour. In the exhibition, the coke cans return, in a colour field Coke/Pepsi painting, only this time the cans are tiny. Their small scale and their random disposition, determined by an algorithm, result in a colour field that, on a superficial level is optically similar to the *Leftover Paint Abstractions* series, yet, being machine-generated, emanate sensations of choice or subjectivity.

Xavier Hufkens

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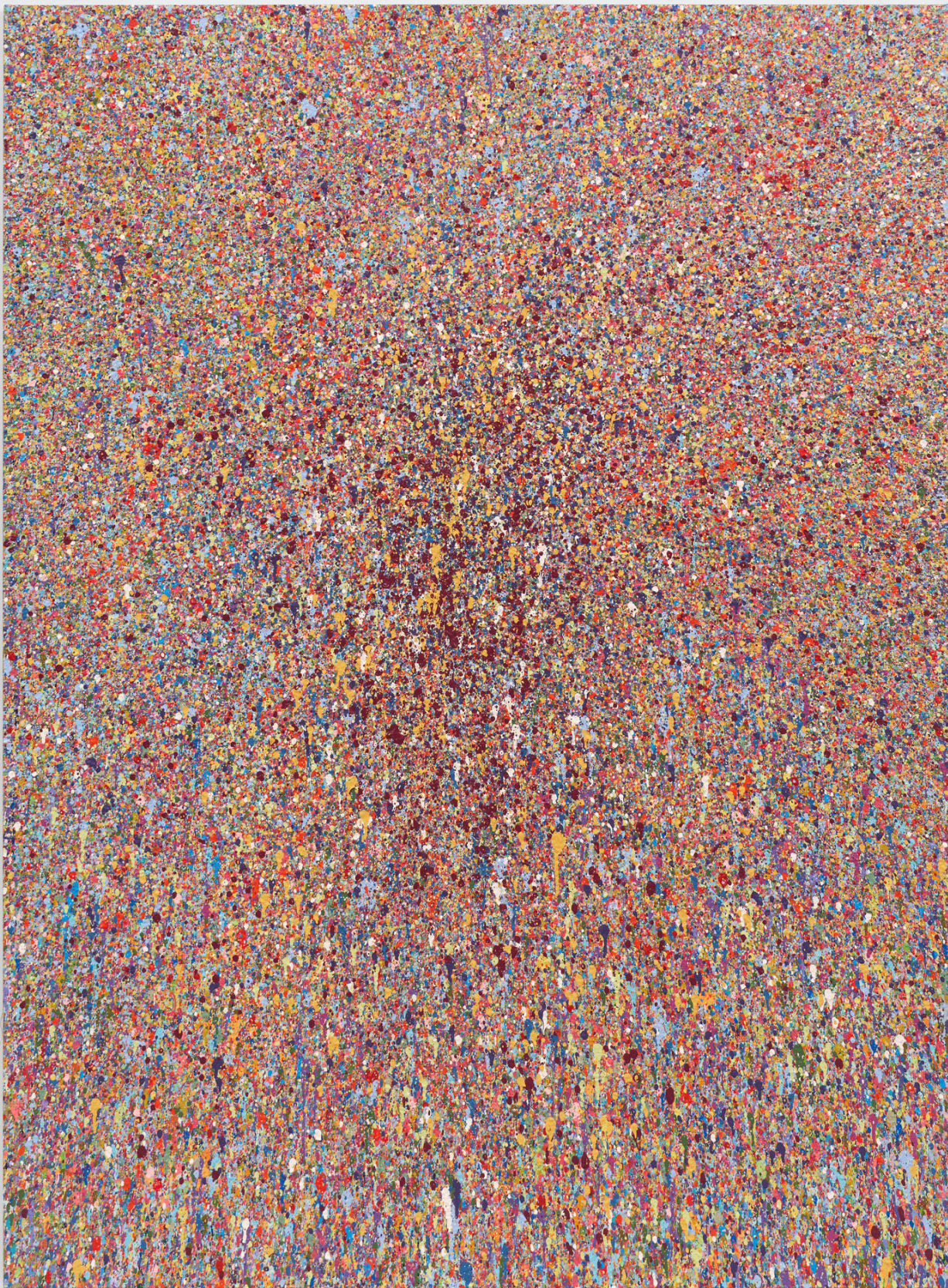
Three *Leftover Glitter Abstractions* blend together different hues of glitter. The artist describes what you get when you mix these shiny particles of colour as “a kind of iridescent mud.” Again, Horowitz folds the idea of recycling into the artworks’ form. He describes the paintings as “monochromish”, but in their composition they bear the clear traces of earlier works the artist executed in reference to (or in reverence of) other artists: a flag painting, reminiscent of the work of Jasper Johns, a larger work based on a Coke/Pepsi painting and an oval painting, just like the oval mirror painting he instructed his studio assistants to reiterate after a painting by Roy Lichtenstein, which, together, revealed each painter’s subjectivity.

On the occasion of the exhibition *Leftover Paint Abstractions*, Xavier Hufkens has published a catalogue featuring an essay by the New York-based writer and curator Joshua Decter, and an interview with the artist by the curator and director of the Swiss Institute New York, Simon Castets.

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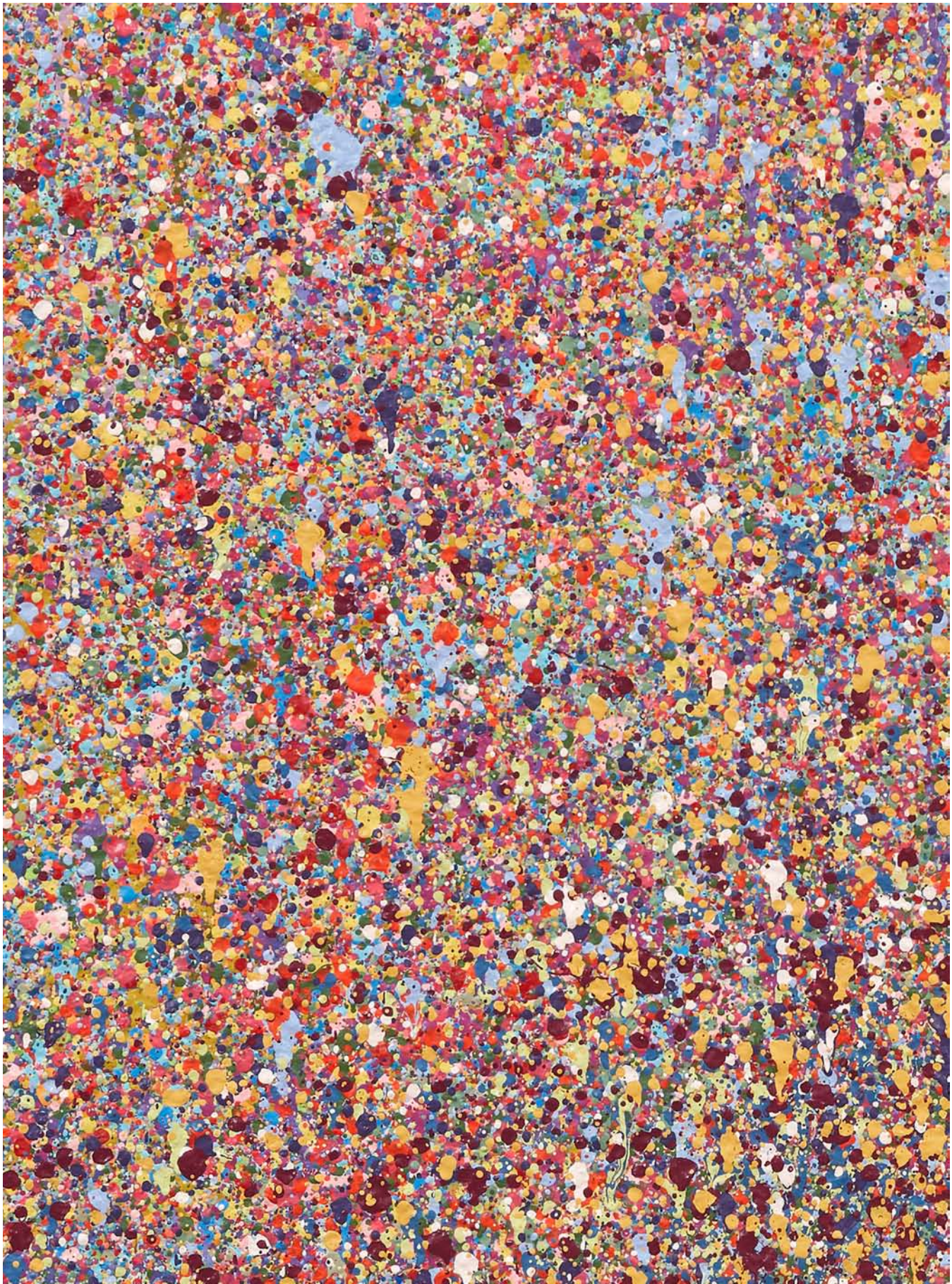
Leftover Paint Abstraction #1 (75" × 55"), 2016

acrylic on linen, 190.5 × 139.7 cm (75 × 55 × 1 3/8 in.)

Courtesy the Artist and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels

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Leftover Paint Abstraction #1 (75" × 55"), 2016 (detail)

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