

KÖNIG LONDON

ROBERT JANITZ | CHANGE IN PARADISE

22 MARCH – 4 MAY 2019

OPENING: THURSDAY 21 MARCH 2019, 6 – 8 PM

Robert Janitz makes works that circle around the moment in the artist's studio where the application of paint transforms a mundane surface (say a stretched piece of linen) into something that has an effect on the viewer. The first viewer to see this happen is the painter. For a subsequent viewer looking at a finished work in a gallery this moment is always something that has already happened. The moment of the creation of meaning is in the past and when we encounter the painting we are left to re-create that moment as best as we can.

Janitz typically uses translucent bold strokes that rise and fall along the vertical axis of his works in a rough methodical fashion. They merge with the underpainting so there is no pictorial depth, no distinct background or foreground. Instead there is an articulation of that moment of becoming – when content and meaning appear on the surface of the work and are immediately transformed into something else. He uses basic tools. His brushes are bought from hardware shops and he has mixed materials such as flour or wax into his paint. He uses simple analogies such as painting being like buttering a piece of toast (this is not to say his paintings are ever representations of buttered toast, but more to draw attention to the way an action transforms a surface into something new). His vertical strokes resemble the layers of whitewash put on the windows of shops that have gone bankrupt, hiding something that is just beyond what we can make out.

Perhaps these strategies suggest an element of gentle teasing. Painting is presented as a basic, everyday act that can produce a myriad of complex effects yet it will never be possible for the viewer to re-create that exact moment when a painting takes on meaning. How can something so simple result in a series of effects that is so complex to articulate? The viewer might try and piece together that moment where these effects are created but her or his view is always impeded; by the finished surface, by their own thoughts, by the flow of time. Meaning has always already happened. The viewer is left to be the curious passer-by, trying to peer through the whitewash to work out what the bankrupt shop used to stock.

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Painting becomes temporal, a creation of effect and meaning that warp and weft from the moment it is articulated in the studio through to the moment it is seen by the viewer. Janitz both gestures to and shrugs at the impossibility of re-creating the process of making a painting, his basic tools gently mocking our pretensions to re-staging the profound when we encounter a painting. There are even benches in the exhibition space of *Change in Paradise* lending a contemplative air, although even their status as works of art is unclear. Where does meaning begin? And yet there is optimism in all of this - meaning might be elusive but fragments and traces are right there, right in front of us. Perhaps we just need to stop looking too hard.

Born in 1962 in Alsfeld in Germany, Robert Janitz lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He previously lived in Paris. He has recently had solo exhibitions at CANADA (2018), Anton Kern (2018), Meyer Riegger (2017, 2015 and 2014), Team Gallery (2017 and 2015), Shoot the Lobster (2012) and Clearing (2012 and 2011). Forthcoming exhibitions include 'Frozen Gesture' at Kunstmuseum Winterthur, Switzerland in 2019. He was Professor at École Supérieure Des Beaux Arts, Cherbourg, France in 2009 and a Guest Lecturer of Visual Arts at University Paris 8, Paris, France from 2003 to 2007.