

Landon Metz – *Fourth Wall*

December 28, 2017 – February 24, 2018

Von Bartha, S-chanf announces an exhibition of new large-scale paintings by New York-based artist Landon Metz.

Landon Metz's practice revolves around the activity of painting, yet also incorporates the vocabulary of sculpture, installation as well as performance. By spreading thin washes of dye on raw canvas, the artist achieves varying degrees of coloristic saturations. Moreover, through the repetition of the same compositional arrangements, often in a sequence and beyond the margin of the canvas, Metz evokes visual dynamism and a sense of movement.

Though his paintings are the result of a predetermined process, each is unique in appearance, owing to the fact that the unprimed canvas reveals its natural properties and allows for chance interactions to occur during creation. As a result, both the use of seriality and the technique allow Metz to shift the spectator's focus from any gestures, towards an overall experience of a form, color and hue – time, rhythm and space. Landon Metz's paintings question what the spectator may discover and discern through first-hand experience. The artist states:

“I'm using what Duchamp would describe as 'retinal art' as a tool, a framework for a sort of performance that has less to do with my paintings than the viewers' responses to them.”

The exhibition at von Bartha tests the 'fourth wall' – a concept only perceptible once broken. Like flooding light behind a two-way mirror, to acknowledge an audience mid-narrative is to undermine its anonymity, undercutting any presumed division between what's on- and off-stage. The gesture comes, above all, as an acknowledgment of the external world, an authorial decision which allows context to color one's output. In using one convention to subvert others, it is also a kind of concession, with the work admitting to its own fictions, forcing us to reassess the parameters of medium, delivery, and reception alike.

For those inclined, such self-reflexivity can constitute a field of research. Art, after all, functions as a shifting set of narratives (aesthetic, economic, social, cultural, institutional), each and all primed for a turn of the lens: the authorial potential of chance occurrence; the performative nature of presenting (and responding to) artworks; even the broader cultural predispositions surrounding art itself—such precepts may be manipulated like any other material, resulting in work that carries a sense of its own nature while pointing beyond itself towards more expanded views.

Moralist philosophy deemed clarity the counterbalance of profound thought: In and beyond theatre, self-awareness would come at the expense of poetry, its effect similar to being roused from a daydream. Morals aside, such ideas endure on stages and screens, in cinemas and, indeed, the gallery space: just as clearness comes at a remove, so is immersion equated with illusion, a willful suspension of disbelief that leaves formalized structures to hide in plain view. Breaking the fourth wall would normally serve to deflate such enthrallments. But to

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take self-awareness as starting point – to forgo imaginary fields and begin with the wall already leveled, the narratives exposed – and still find the means for immersive experience? So may the author and audience find their roles converged, each now discerning but not distant, both sharing a common stage.

About the artist

Landon Metz was born in Phoenix, USA in 1985 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He has appeared in solo exhibitions in the USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark and Italy. In 2014, Metz was the artist in residence at the ADN Collection in Bolzano, Italy. Upcoming solo exhibitions include Museo Pietro Canonica, Rome (2018) and at Sean Kelly, New York (2019).

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