

Pigpen Dispossessed

Joseph Montgomery

February 20 - March 27, 2021

Public Open House: Saturday, February 20. 11am-5pm.

In his first solo exhibition with the gallery, Joseph Montgomery presents a series of new works that maintain his ongoing examination of abstract painting. Utilizing three distinctive, generative types of painting classified by the artist as shims, monotypes and collages, the exhibition points to an expanded understanding of painting through an exploration of its fundamental principles.

Montgomery's work appears to lie at the intersection of sculpture and painting. While his objects make use of the construction and syntax associated with sculpture, the classic components of painting also remain: wood, canvas, various mediums and paint. What results is a peculiar hybrid but also, more importantly to the artist, an opportunity to analyze the intrinsic elements that define painting. These include the role of a painting's ground, the perception of three dimensions, the influence of photography and image making, and the function of color. Through three parallel disciplines of creating shims, monotypes, and collages, Montgomery sets out to create paintings that point to these elements, enlisting a set of actions that exceed the mere act of painting.

The monotypes exist most closely to what might traditionally be understood as a painting, given their relative two-dimensionality; however, the elements at play seek to muddy muddy the origin of their making. Their surfaces, built up with thin films of color, raise questions about the artist's process and the interdependency of multiple modes of mark-making. Montgomery's shims utilize assembly, form and color to disrupt the singular experience of a painting as background and foreground colors interact and shift relative to a viewer's position. In his complex collages, Montgomery makes use of a wide variety of materials that mimic painting, including paper, clay and fiberglass, to offer a different painting each time one changes their point of view.

Displayed in a line around the gallery, these works defy the restriction of the singular masterpiece in favor of the assorted pieces that make a painting. An accompanying zine produced for the exhibition provides a visual metaphor for this central idea. The zine features drawings of the Peanuts character Pigpen, represented not through his face and body but rather solely through the marks, smudges and cloud of dust that define his likeness. A reflection of his similar interrogation with painting, Montgomery asks, "Would Pigpen still be the same character if he were dispossessed of this dirt, his stains, the orbiting gestures of his naming?"

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Joseph Montgomery (1979, Northampton, MA, US) lives and works in New York. He received a BA from Yale University and an MFA from Hunter College CUNY in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include *Joe* at Dürst Britt & Mayhew, *Via degli Eremiti* at CAR DRDE in Bologna, *Rules for Coyote* at Dürst Britt & Mayhew, *DOLLS* (with Sherrie Levine) at Paula Cooper Gallery, *Heads, Calves* at Laurel Gitlen, *Doll Index* at Peter Blum Gallery and *Five Sets Five Repts* at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA). His work was also shown in the seminal group exhibition *Painter Painter* at The Walker Art Centre in Minneapolis. Work by Montgomery is held in private and public collections, including the Centraal Museum Utrecht and The Walker Art Centre.