

Richard Aldrich on the plurality of painting



Installation view of Richard Aldrich's 'Eight Paintings' solo show at Misako & Rosen | KEI OKANO

Richard Aldrich's "Eight Paintings" is his third solo exhibition with Misako & Rosen, but his first in their current exhibition space in Tokyo's Otsuka district. As the title suggests, it comprises eight small-scale works. It opens as his show "Time Stopped, Time Started" closes at Gladstone Gallery in New York and runs until the end of April.

Aldrich's work is defined by his consideration of the stylistic and material possibilities of painting. His quiet and nuanced approach has produced a variety of intriguing works full of misfit and marginal painting ideas. In his 2009 essay for *Art in America*, Raphael Rubinstein included Aldrich in his definition of "Provisional Painting." It referred to painting that looks "casual, dashed-off, tentative, unfinished or self-cancelling." This statement remains pertinent in the consideration of Aldrich's work.

The exhibition space is uncrowded with each painting given sufficient space to be viewed individually, and the impression upon entering the gallery is of a muted white space punctuated by pools of color and figuration. Adding to this effect, Aldrich has altered the gallery's lighting. Half of the strip lights have been switched to bulbs with a light gray-blue filter to create a cool diffuse light.

There is a great diversity in terms of materials, means of execution and subject matter in the works. Some are painted in oils, some wax and others acrylic; some are on board, one canvas and one on paper. They vary from the obscure and abstract to the generously figurative. Interestingly, although the works feel concurrent in their production, they span a number of years with the oldest from 2001 and the newest 2015.

In "Untitled (Mirror)," Aldrich has painted over and over on the same panel, obscuring previous images and leaving a textural history. These deletions are present in other works too. The layering emphasizes a difficulty in settling on one image and gives the paintings a restless and self-conscious quality.

Conversely, other works appear strikingly clear and concise. "Mountains" features just two triangles composed from bands of blue, white, green and brown sitting on a clean white background. On the wall to the left of this is a portrait of Pink Floyd's Syd Barrett, hung salon-style above the green and white "Untitled (object)." The figure of Barrett turns his gaze out toward the viewer as if called upon or aware of the presence of the painting below.

Though diverse, the works do not compete with one another as they hold such different values. Indeed, the sheer variety in painting draws explicit attention to each piece's distinct formal qualities. Aldrich is unconcerned with creating a dominant or domineering pictorial style, and this exhibition represents a statement for pluralism in painting. It is inclusive and idiosyncratic.