

David Rhodes, "Richard Aldrich: Enter the Mirror," *The Brooklyn Rail*, April 4, 2018



RICHARD ALDRICH: *Enter the Mirror*



Richard Aldrich, *Enter the Mirror*, (installation view), 2018. Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, New York.
Photo: Ron Amstutz.

Painting is but one option among many for Richard Aldrich, his abstract paintings being just the most familiar, as can be seen in this latest exhibition at Bortolami, his fourth at the gallery. Included here are: paintings, found objects, silk-screened text, collage, boxes, and works on paper by Eduoard Vuillard. As the artist's attitude toward exhibiting is in part curatorial, we can ask, is there an imposed and coherent narrative, or alternatively, a number of possible networks for the viewer to connect each as valid as the next? Given Aldrich's participation in psychoanalysis (he acknowledges the significance of this in interviews) as well as his commitment to writing, music, and visual art—can we perhaps assume that there are as many paths through, or ways to receive the exhibition's constellation of various parts as there are visitors, and so interpretations. The answer is surely, yes. Initially it must have been for Aldrich himself an autobiographical interpretation—referencing as much as exposing in the process of curating, both his desires and epiphanies.

The exhibition's carefully crafted contextual web catches histories—both personal and art-historical. Within Aldrich's own oeuvre, a collage, *"Tuck, Tuck, Tuck" with Cut Out Shapes from Time Life Book Series on Blue Construction Paper*, (2002), a text, enamel silk screened onto dibond panel, *Sci-fi Short Story From 2007* (2017-18), *"In Search of..."* 2017 (2012, 2010, 2000) and *RRRs*, 2017 (2014) are all either from previous years, or titled to indicate a connection

to previous years. This presentation or representation of works alludes to passing time and the decision not to see that time as completed or lost, but rather elliptically present. Aldrich sites a number of quotations that have been influential to his practice in the press release and not surprisingly several are from or refer to Marcel Proust. Add to this the two French bourgeois images from Vuillard and that flux of both locating oneself in life whilst at the same time being lost in contingency. Formally, both Aldrich's non-objective and obliquely representational paintings recall the febrile adjustments that form rough edged shapes in the work of the 1890s post-impressionist group the Nabis—one of whom was Vuillard. This artist's psychological acuity in presenting ambiguities of everyday life (like Bonnard, another Nabis) and his often provisional and searching painterly touch, can be taken as important inspiration for Aldrich's own paintings. Take, *Untitled*, (2016-2017) in which several shapes overlap and nudge each other, the color soberly resonant, the surface of enamel, wax, and oil worked intuitively into sensuously jagged form.



Richard Aldrich, "Tuck Tuck Tuck" with Cut Out Shapes from Time Life Book Series on Blue Construction Paper, 2002. Acrylic and collage on paper, 18 x 12 inches. Courtesy the artist and Bortolami, New York. Photo: Ron Amstutz.

All the objects presented in the exhibition are on white plinths of various heights; some are very low so we can look down onto an object that is almost at floor level. *Untitled* (2002) comprises an open metal box, its lid lying next to the box. On its inside surface are either drawn pencil lines, or accidental scratches—it is difficult to tell and perhaps incidental to know. Within the box a bar of soap underneath a CD of German rock band Can's first record, *Monster Movie* (1969) is visible reflected in the metal of the box. Aldrich has often brought musical references to his work; he performs and records with the band Hurray alongside his production as a visual artist. An encounter with this exhibition gives one a strong sense that Aldrich seeks an actualization of intent through sustaining openness to each work's internal meaning combined with the particular confluence of works for any in a specific installation. Signs and sensibilities are gleaned as much from day to day life as art theory—deciphering the textual elements and disjunctions of found objects are equal to seeing how an abstract painting's presence makes us feel or perceive—the exhibition remains holistic in its heterogeneity.