

GLADSTONE

D. Creahan, "New York – Richard Aldrich: 'Enter the Mirror' at Bortolami Gallery Through April 21st, 2018," *Art Observed*, April 17, 2018

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NEW YORK – RICHARD ALDRICH: "ENTER THE MIRROR" AT BORTOLAMI GALLERY THROUGH APRIL 21ST, 2018



Richard Aldrich, *Wizard* (2017), via Bortolami

Diving into the language and history of painting, artist [Richard Aldrich's](#) new exhibition at [Bortolami Gallery](#) comes up to the surface with a diverse series of finds, spanning a range of practice that underscores his unique and energetic practice. The show, which combines both sculptural interventions and a range of canvases mixing text, drawing and oil painting, offers an impressive look at the artist's recent work, and leaves the viewer grasping for steady ground. Yet, as the case with many great artists, Aldrich seems to fundamentally understand the joy in a little hard work, and the conceptual twists his pieces carry make their often confounding arrangements particularly rewarding for intrepid viewers ready to crack open a puzzle.

A relentlessly inventive stylist, Aldrich has several times over sought to challenge and redefine the potential for the canvas in the current landscape of contemporary practice, a goal that has no shortage of challenges. Yet Aldrich's roving eye for materials and signs leads to an incorporative practice that mixes together objects and fragments, creating a collision of images and symbols that double back on the viewer's own attempts at understanding the show in unified terms. Bodies frequently appear and reappear, like in his piece *In Search Of...* (2017), which shows a ghostly head floating over a chunk of evocative text, while elsewhere, a cartoonish silhouette of a wizard (appropriately titled *Wizard*) presents a completely divergent presentation of the body. Both appear in abstractions of sorts, the former as a free-floating specter, and the latter as a referent in a broader system of meanings, both gestural and historical, and then are warped again through the lens of works from *Portrait of Olivia in Three Colors*, *All Olivia*, which places a jacket atop a white column in a comically deconstructed portrait.

In other works, the body of the canvas itself turns into a space for similar postings of painterly logic, such as in *RRRs* (2017), which underscores the canvas's surface less as a site for the exercise of the brush, and more as a space for arrangement of depths and intensities. This is again countered by an untitled work nearby, which sees Aldrich applying his signature mode of scratchy, playful oil-work to the canvas. Mixing hands and styles so effortlessly, Aldrich's pieces seem to push endlessly on the understanding of the canvas, and its potentials.



Richard Aldrich, *Enter the Mirror* (Installation View), via Bortolami

Aldrich's pieces, then, might be understood as a certain sense of revelry in a "body in crisis," digging into threads of thought and criticism that treat modern painting as an end game of sorts. Aldrich, however, poses the question of why that declaration of painting's conclusion even matters. In the sense of breaking down barriers and rebuilding the field, of reconstituting the painterly form, or the sculptural form, or perhaps most accurately, an ever-evolving hybrid of both, Aldrich's work makes the case for a thousand new beginnings.

The artist's work is on view through April 21st.