

FRIEZE

Jerónimo Rüedi's Abstractions Insist on Ambivalence

At Bureau, New York, his airbrushed paintings feature enigmatic forms that evoke the first cracklings of consciousness

September 30, 2025

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Jerónimo Rüedi, 'Preaesns', 2025. Courtesy: Jerónimo Rüedi and Bureau, New York

'Preaesns' at Bureau in New York marks Jerónimo Rüedi's first solo show in the United States. Long the subject of exhibitions around Mexico, and more recently in Europe – such as at Galerie Nordenhake in Stockholm and Berlin – the Argentina-born painter's arrival on US soil marks an exciting event in contemporary painting. The artist, who lives between Mexico City and Berlin, has proved himself over the past decade to be a rigorous and thought-provoking experimentalist. Recent works range from lo-fi artist books of brush-and-ink cartoons which read as if David Shrigley created a volume of deconstructionist linguistics for Semiotext(e), to large-scale, neo-baroque paintings sufficiently ceremonious to be displayed to great spiritual effect in the halls of the Ex-Convent of Yanhuatlán, Oaxaca. Comprising eight works made using an airbrush – six canvases and two in encaustic on aluminium – 'Preaesns' is the latest offering in a career defined by surprising, ever-evolving material replies to roving philosophical inquiries.

The exhibition title alone reveals Rüedi's interest in processes of signification. It is unusual for a title not to be a real word, but its half-recognizable state is representative of Rüedi's work in general, which proposes an ethics of indeterminacy over outright declaration. Is 'Preaesns' a misspelling of *presence*? Of *paeon*? It suggests both but is neither, suspended instead in an ambivalent state allowing for manifold interpretations. The titles of the individual paintings largely follow suit. The letters of *Oirgn 01* and *Ihmnorant Suidies* (both 2025), for example, seem provisional, as if searching for the order that would allow them to spell *Origin* and *Ignorant Studies*. With these titles, Rüedi flashes his readerly wit, evoking minimalist poet Aram Saroyan's single-word poem 'lighght' (1965), in which the luminous invisibility of light is accentuated by the misspelling's reduplication of silent consonants.

The paintings on view – objects of an almost sculptural presence – are as indeterminate and multivalent as their titles. Rüedi's technique involves overlaying dozens of translucent acrylic layers with an airbrush, which creates an illusion of depth verging on *trompe l'oeil*. Amidst these atmospheric fields are the paintings' inscrutable protagonists, variously in the foreground or pushed into the background by successive layering. These scribbled lumps, spirals and strokes are so animatedly rendered that they appear possessed of an opaque will, yet their enigmatic forms recall the inkblots in a Rorschach test. They hint at the things of our world – such as the suggestions of chairs in *Oirgn 01* – as the titles hint at real words. Are they abstract marks? Asemic letters? Strange creatures the painter has caught in the act of becoming, as they shift and repeat through quantum dimensions? Rüedi's line is kinetic, off-kilter, graceful, at times even mischievous, as if he were moving his hand in unpremeditated dashes against all his training, in search of gesture before it becomes thought. Standing before the paintings of 'Preaesns' elicits a sense that we are viewing a depiction of the very first cracklings of consciousness, before understanding has intervened.



Jerónimo Rüedi, *Oirgn 01*, 2025, encaustic on aluminum mounted to wood, 60 × 50 cm. Courtesy: Jerónimo Rüedi and Bureau, New York

Unlike much art produced in Mexico today – take, for example, Chavis Mármol's sensational *Tesla Crushed by an Olmec Head* (2024) or Ana Segovia's movingly queered *charros* (Pos' se acabó este cantar [Well, this song is over], 2021) – Rüedi's 'Preaesns' does not foreground questions of ethics and identity. And yet it does not give the impression of retreating from such concerns, either. Rather, by resisting clear figuration in both image and language, Rüedi paints in the interstices of shared understanding, cultivating an inchoate realm that precedes discursive concepts, the very ones that might be used to undergird such political statements. Taken this way, Rüedi's paintings turn their viewers back in on themselves, provoking a state of inquiry rather than assertion. But perhaps you see them differently?

Jerónimo Rüedi's 'Preaesns' is on view at Bureau, New York until 25 October