

W. Rossen Ostend

February 4 2023 - March 23 2023

Hands, wheels, cameras. Hands holding and carving other hands, hands holding cameras, legs operating wheels. A residential street, wheat fields, an office setting.

The works of W. Rossen present objects with such affection that one doubts their existence as objects. Wheels are a recurring matter, imposing a sculpture-like quality. Generally considered a circular component intended to rotate, Rossen's wheels behold intimacy and elicit sympathy. Is the wheel to be understood as a functioning entity or an abstract monument? And are the objects to be seen or sensed as wheels in Rossen's paintings, composed as such yet with significant dissimilarities? The paintings discard the immediate functional purpose of the portrayed objects, shaping them like a sculptor's hand carving the raw material. Whether to be perceived as purposeful components or as contours of abstract sculpture, the wheels move (or roll, one could say) through Rossen's works, continually recurring and negating retention.

Subjects occur solely through the hands and legs holding or operating objects. In *After Engewormer, 2022*, a hand holds a camera as the lens projects a landscape—the optical instrument shows us what is being captured, the lens' reflection hiding as a landscape painting in plain sight. In *Handen, Kamer, 2022*, hands hold and carve other, smaller hands. In front of the hands at work rests a film camera, emerging from the canvas through the technique of applying dried pieces of acrylic medium onto the canvas (keeping everything acrylic on canvas), consequently injecting a three-dimensional quality into the otherwise flat representation.

Objects, as instruments or components, become bearers of propulsive power through which they move between Rossen's paintings. *Åsgårdstrand, 2022*, shows a street from an Edvard Munch painting from 1902. In Rossen's impression, the street is deprived of colour and figures. A golden wheel leans against a fence, resembling a wheel from Jan van Goyen's *Landscape with Oak* from 1634. The contours of Munch's street emerge from the canvas through the dried acrylic medium. The white-ground picture plane with the outlines of a public space appears as a sparse icon painting, the prized gold reduced to the leaning wheel. In the foreground, the silhouette of the film camera recurs.

Whereas Jan van Goyen's wheel looks unequivocally wrecked, Rossen's wheels are modified, and their purpose recomposed. In *Ostend, 2022*, the first-person perspective of a bike rider suggests wheels. One can imagine the wheels on the bike but not see them. In *Engewormer, 2022*, one-third of a bike wheel with a chainset positioned in a wheat field becomes an advanced, almost surreal, agricultural instrument. The space between the spokes looks like they are stretched with thin rice paper.

W. Rossen approaches the canvas with his hands and feet, capturing objects and projecting other images onto them. With the same set of tools, the artist's movements activate the wheels, driving them forward. The paintings' retained segments of bodies and conflicting perspectives insinuate a here—whether a Norwegian beach town or a Dutch wheat field. Rossen employs recognisable objects and scenery as collages, thus sculpting a distinctive system of meaning. The recognisability alludes to a “here,” but where?

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