

Derosia

Kern Samuel

Paining

March 3–May 6, 2023

Kern Samuel's exhibition at Derosia explores the conceptual implications of his medium's frequent phonetic slippage: *Paining*. Using material and formal signifiers of hurt and healing, Samuel elucidates analogues of pain and recovery inherent to the practice of painting, while contemplating the generative potential of affliction and the cathartic potential of art. The works on view are incised, distressed, stained, but also sutured and reassembled with visible care. In *Paining*, Samuel implicitly links the binary of additive and subtractive methods to cycles of injury and recovery, underscoring the ways in which progress and regress are entangled in a painting's completion. More broadly, the artist examines pain as a mode of signification, and the ways in which its expression relates to discourse surrounding the semiotics of painting.

Samuel articulates the concept of *Paining* on multiple symbolic levels. Samuel's works behave indexically, betraying not only the labor of their making, but also the temporality of their materials. Rust and iron oxide, physical vestiges of time and endurance, are primary pigments in the body of works on view. Chiffon is layered over steel in *The Observer* and *Sail Without a Ship* (all works 2023 unless otherwise noted), pairing fragility with resilience and intimating skin over bone. The patinated *Together Again* (2021–2023) implies its own evolution in its title, its circular format visibly divided into parts and stitched together once more. On the other hand, *Seven Circles* is composed of strips of newspaper, referencing the time of their making on a collective axis rather than an individual one.

The more classical index of painting, the brushstroke, is used sparingly in *Paining*, relegating the physical trace of the artist in favor of the more cerebral, ephemeral interventions of judgment and labor. Samuel's works index subjectivity in that they bear a causal relationship to the collected experiences and decisions of their maker. For this body of work, Samuel works in visual pairs, his templates—targets, crosses, tondos—becoming containers for a series of maneuvers. In *Crossing*, rust treated fabric peels away from its steel template, mirroring its original frame to form a cross. The work's title collapses form and action, underscoring the economy of the work as well as its causality. The iconography of the crucifix, an archetype of suffering, recurs across the works, appearing in its most starkest form in *Crossing* and reverberating in works such as *Cross in a Square* and *Recollections*, each of which is composed in quadrants.

Pain is frequently expressed indexically, a scar or a bruise being a lasting imprint of a transient event. Otherwise, pain is imperceptible outside the subjectivity of the feeler. In *Paining*, Kern Samuel addresses the necessity of representing interior life symbolically. This exhibition explores not a one dimensional form of physical hurt, but the broader specificity and ineffability of interior experience.

Kern Samuel (b. 1990, Mount Hope, Trinidad and Tobago) lives and works in New Haven, CT. Recent institutional exhibitions include Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany (2022); The Africa Center, New York (2022, traveling exhibition); and White Columns, New York (2022). Other solo and group exhibitions include Derosia, New York (2022); Bodega (Derosia), New York (2021); the bunker, Santa Monica Mountains, CA (2022); Gallery Aferro, Newark, NJ (2019, 2018); Theresa A. Maloney Art Gallery, College of Saint Elizabeth, Morristown, NJ (2018); and Jeffrey Stark, New York (2017). This is the artist's second solo exhibition with Derosia.