

## **RJ Messineo**

### *Piano Paintings*

April 14 - May 20, 2023

Morán Morán is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by RJ Messineo in the artist's second exhibition at our Los Angeles gallery. Titled *Piano Paintings*, this show of over ten recent pieces, which range in scale and also traverse the color spectrum, introduce works composed of oil paint over canvas and sections of thin plywood that test out moving parts, modes of abstraction, and methods of mark-making. Implied by the exhibition's title, the paintings have a conceptual correspondence with the piano, an instrument often used to develop musical compositions, so that these works function as experiments in visual rhythm and the organization of individual parts within the whole.

*Criss-Cross* (2023), one of the largest works in the show, is a stacked diptych that went through the exercise of experimentation through the repetitive shifting of elements until reaching its ultimate composition. Originally two separate paintings, Messineo opted to stack them, separated the parts again, repainted them separately, then flipped the panels upside down, restacked them, and so on, until reaching the final iteration. According to the artist: "This painting is like the right and left hand playing together. Sometimes, when you listen and isolate what is being played by each hand, the separate parts sound self-contained and contradictory, but one also offers possibility to the other."

A suite of vertical works continue themes familiar to Messineo's practice, including the observation and recording of fleeting impressions of life in constant flux. One, titled *Arrangement for House Finch* (2023), is a piece created after the artist watched two birds make a nest in a rolled-up bamboo window blind, and *Anagram* (2023) interprets a summer garden. Flickering greens, yellows, pinks, and browns are joined by a dispersed grid embedded in a field of marks. Other squares of color on the canvas interrupt the flow of paint, while more harmoniously, a gradient of green squares moves up the center of the piece, almost like a scale notation.

The works in this exhibition purposely prohibit conclusions – there is an impulse in the paintings to blur the distinctions between categories and an effort to set up multiple kinds of relationships, simultaneously. Messineo focuses on the indexical mark, the trace of process, and the effect of operational color: asking how each informs the other in terms of perception, movement, and most importantly, change.