

# BODENRADER

Paul Levack

DECEMBER 2, 2023 – JANUARY 27, 2024

Paul Levack continues his recent exploration of direct photography using a replicant version of a lens favored by early Pictorialists. The lens causes a luscious blurring and softens light into a nearly Gaussian abstraction, a quality that heightens the intensity of his experiential subject matter. The prints are varnished, mounted on Dibond, and gently framed using hand painted craft wood strips (an economic favorite of the Abstract Expressionists and painters since). In these new works, Paul further emphasizes the surface of his prints through subtle manipulation of each photograph's grain texture and a careful attention to scale in relation to subject. In all, Paul's painterly material manipulation of photography creates a sophisticated, and not entirely un-sinister, atmosphere of playfulness and wonder.

A landscape, a dog in the park, an artifact dish in a museum display case, a close inspection of a painting, and two women passing him by. Paul emphasizes a firsthand experience of the sensual reality of things on Earth while also reveling in the manipulative potential of representation. In a refreshing shift away from the strict confines of hardline conceptual photography — but not entirely without its teachings — these new images emphasize the viewer's subjectivity and the artist's ability to enhance perception.

Paul uses a touch of snapshot handling balanced by careful editing, image selection, and considerate display. There is a deep appreciation of historical precedents and nods to the frequently depicted, guiltily pleasurable subjects of art (see: any dog painted in any pre 20th-century painting). A seemingly spontaneous capture of passerby is also a humorous and knowing riff on the Impressionists' observation of their cities. A picture of a field plays with the familiarity and consistent renewal of the landscape genre via literal distortion. Pictures of objects in the museum nod to the important critical gestures of the previous generation of photographers yet encourage intimacy over distance with refreshing casualness.

What we witness in this new group of pictures is Paul's further refinement of a tasteful irreverence as well as a devotion to photography as a medium. The aesthetic pleasure of Art is the first and last concern. It's a succulent and knowing aestheticism including lessons from our greatest ancestors. Entailing knowledge of how to compose elegant pictures, how to speak to something universal, and, most importantly, when to break the rules.

— Ramsey Alderson, 2023

Paul Levack (b. 1992, Akron, OH) lives and works in Mannheim, Germany. Levack received his BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and his MFA from the Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, where he studied under professor Peter Fischli. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include Gaylord Apartments, Los Angeles, CA; Neue Alte Brücke, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Plymouth Rock, Zürich, Switzerland; Guzzler, Rosanna, Australia; zaza', Milan, Italy; Haus der Kunst, Oslo; GB Agency, Paris, France; and First Continent, Baltimore, MD. Selected group exhibitions include LINSEED + Ginny on Frederick, Shanghai, China; zaza', Milan, Italy; Guzzler, Rosanna, Australia; Red Tracy, Copenhagen, Denmark; Kammer-Rieck, Berlin, Germany; Le Meridian, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Kavita B. Schmid, New York, NY; and Mathew, New York, NY.