

The intimate monochrome paintings in Daniel Lefcourt's exhibition Prepared Ground return to the subject of painting itself, yet here painting is never fully itself.

On the one hand, the works are positivistic, presenting only brute materials and evidence of their manipulation. Impressions and textures function as proof of past operations, inviting us to reconstruct those operations in the present. Scraps of wood, water, cloth, paper, dirt, and other materials appear to have left indexical impressions on the surface of the painting. The works are not abstract, for as with artists who observe a strict adherence to procedure (Ryman, Barré) the concern is always to present the real – without illusion, and without editorializing.

Yet, in Lefcourt's work the real manifests itself in unexpected, often counter-intuitive ways. In these paintings the traces, marks, and impressions, are not always what they seem. In fact, many of the impressions would be impossible to make with any direct technique. This is particularly true given the chosen materials' propensity towards impermanence and chance. In Lefcourt's work, gradual transformations – paper soaking into liquid, bubbles forming and dissolving, soil crumbling, dust blowing – have been frozen in mid-process.

To accomplish this task of freezing, Lefcourt devised an elaborate preservation method, in which digital photographs are translated into three-dimensions, and then output using a computer controlled router to carve low-relief molds. Acrylic paint is then poured into the mold, and finally peeled-up and adhered to the linen support. Here painting is understood not only as support and surface, but as particle and binder. Paint cast into Painting. In the final stage, the rote application of monochromatic oil paint both covers and discloses the topography of the surface. The resulting traces of process – what might be called non-indexical traces – are at once simulated and substantial, shallow and fertile. Is this Painting behind itself?

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