

CHRIS SUCCO

Air Guitar

25/01/25 – 09/03/25

Ruttkowski;68 Düsseldorf

Ruttkowski;68 is pleased to present *Air Guitar* in Düsseldorf, Chris Succo's first solo exhibition with the gallery.

At the heart of Succo's artistic practice is painting. However, through his ongoing drive to develop new pictorial inventions and the resulting material research and experimentations, he is constantly expanding it to include photography, sculpture and installation elements. While his visual language is formally rooted in the tradition of Abstract Expressionism, another characteristic feature of many works is that they are imbued with individual impressions and experiences and draw on influences from both subcultures and popular culture.

With his latest series, the *Connecticut Paintings*, he leaves his usual paths and concentrates on what is essential - painting. There is nothing left of the material experiments of earlier works or the spatial character of past exhibitions. The painted picture in its very own materiality - colour and canvas - confronts us viewers with its full force. All concentration is directed towards the basic elements of the medium, with the aim of finding oneself in the painting, regardless of all external circumstances.

After Succo completely banished color from his works in his series, it now returns with full force in the *Connecticut Paintings*. The newly created series is based on an intensive color research, which he devoted himself to during a residency at the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation in Connecticut. Far away from everyday life and everything familiar, surrounded by pristine nature, he has created an organic colour palette that has absorbed its surroundings and unites almost the entire range of colours. It includes earth tones such as brown or beige, deep, intense blue and delicate pink, through to violet, bright red and yellow.

The energetic, dynamic compositions draw the viewer into the pictorial spaces. Our gaze never rests as the worlds which open up to us are in constant motion and propel it across the canvases, allowing us to grasp the entirety of the large-format compositions. There is nothing contemplative about these paintings, and although they are intensely colourful, they are anything but compliant. The artist's immediate gesture is captured in the storms of color. The impasto surfaces and lines reveal his energetic style and expose the act of painting.

The compositions, assembled of overlapping planes of color and complex networks of lines, seem to oscillate between control and its loss. *Shadows Are Phantoms* (2024) allows us to be immersed in the dazzling, ever-changing colours of a sunrise and *Bethany* (2024) to be exposed to the restless play of light under a canopy of leaves. Although the artist's intention was certainly not to depict landscapes, the organically spreading surfaces and meandering lines certainly evoke such associations. Succo flirts with the romantic notion of the solitary artist who finds inspiration in nature from the seclusion of his Connecticut Residency, moving from the impression of nature to individual expression.

Meanwhile, works such as *Adrenalin Junky* (2024) and *Heavy Air* (2024), which are collages of colour studies, refer to the search for the palette that we encounter in *Air Guitar*. They serve as a kind of footnote and link to the artist's creative processes, which in one way or another always find their way into his works and exhibition concepts. In this way, they also locate the new series within the overall complex of Succo's oeuvre. For if the *Connecticut Paintings* mark a new phase, *Adrenalin Junky* and *Heavy Air* are the constants of the exhibition. They refer to the process which brought the paintings to life and are an expression of the reference system within which Chris Succo's practice evolves.

– Hannah Eckstein