

Michael Benevento is pleased to present a new series of painted works by Joel Holmberg and a specific sculptural Ikebana installation by Tory J. Lowitz.

Joel Holmberg's painted works are produced via a sophisticated system of layering. In his new series Holmberg finds an allusion to his process in an atypical site, the bathroom. In previous bodies of work Holmberg revealed relationships between painting and the digital screen, both through the subject of web design and through his unique process of layering painted information as if in a digital design space like Photoshop. Holmberg's painted images consistently contain graphic qualities, largely due to his printing of intricately cut vinyl sheets for masking and painting in layers. In contemplating this process Holmberg stumbled upon a similar, albeit more banal system of shaping and arranging sheets on a surface. It is an American phenomenon to cover the toilet seat in a public restroom before sitting down, and most public or shared restrooms stock the stalls with flushable paper seat covers. When on vacation abroad or in a shared bathroom with no official seat covers Americans will usually rip and arrange small sheets of toilet paper to provide a protective ring to sit on. The shared bathroom in Holmberg's studio building became the site of several snapshots of toilet-paper arrangement and shifting ambient light. Those snapshots have been converted into a new series of paintings that are sharp and humorous but also surprisingly beautiful in their paint application and formal elegance. The object qualities of the subject matter are obscured.

There is a dry serial presence to the grouping, but individually they have portrait qualities that hover between something playful like coy bathroom selfies, something deadpan like celebrity mugshots, and something more cold like Kubrick's close framing of HAL. Politically charged in the contemporary moment, the subject of the bathroom is complex and varied with discussions ranging from gender normativity to the concept of the drain.

The arrangement of objects and effects in a space to produce a phenomenological experience is as crucial to the Ikebana artist as it is to the Minimal and Post-Minimal artist. The beautiful sculptural installations of artist Tory J. Lowitz are informed by his continuing study and mastery of Sogetsu Ikebana. Though some Ikebana schools focus strictly on flower arranging and limit the use of other materials, Sogetsu Ikebana encourages the use of any material at any scale. Lowitz produces works for viewing within a more traditional Ikebana context and works for viewing in an art context. All works are aesthetically informed by modern Ikebana philosophies as well as by painting and sculptural histories. It is this unique blend of aesthetic awareness that allows Lowitz's installations to separate themselves from more traditional Ikebana arrangements. For this exhibition his generous yet subtle material and flower arrangements will emerge gracefully out of the gallery architecture as

if extensions of the existing conditions of the space. An Ikebana artist forms a relationship between arranged objects and a container; for Lowitz the gallery itself provides the containers. In preparing for the exhibition the artist studied marginal spaces and light movement within the gallery and committed to a color palette and materials specific to the architecture. Throughout the exhibition the installations will be replenished with fresh flowers.

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