

Painting in the midst of an emergency, the artist wonders how the experience of livestreaming the implosion of democracy becomes present in an improvised composition of clouds turning into rocks becoming scribbles and more clouds. Does a landscape or any painting whatsoever contain the sociopathy of white privilege? The painting is like a bowl of water: an emptiness reflecting everything. There is tension and calm, the feeling that everything is about to become something, also a kind of stuckness. Other Maine moments were painted plein-air looking out toward a cove in shifting light, or else using an iPhone pic taken nearby, or came just out of his head. Leidy Churchman works like a painter of signs, flattening and framing wide and close views that often seem to want to lean into direct, sign-like communication of the present, presenting this communication as painting.

Installed against black walls, modernist riffs and references are wrecked against folksy New England everydayness, easy rambles and the “manure of experience.” When the refrigerator stops, we suddenly notice the silence we already inhabit. Within the realm of calmness, it’s agitation and disturbance that make us feel it. A black or red line dividing a kind of landscape in two makes us more aware of the composition’s unity: it is two and one, but not plural. Meanwhile, the eye and painting are biotechnologies awake in the outside world and at the same time nothing: sitting in reality, staring at the light, capturing the cove and the color. This is a practice of finding the lightness as if in the body of a very fat, sweaty, overdressed man... in his smize.

We see nature with the mind. The mind is also in the world, which becomes a lens or wave for seeing the fucked up mind. Probably this can’t be explained or represented, but it can be painted. A painting like *Big Giant Sky* shows only a tiny corner of blue through a brown and green stew of foliage. *Seed Stare* appropriates a motif from an embroidered bedspread and turns it into a multi-eyed Cyclops. *Trans* is a simple composition of bright pink and blue horizontal stripes, a transgender flag that echoes the changing sky in *Morning Warning*. We can travel forever within the watery body of *The Oceans Blew as Blue as Your Eyes*, its various channels and passageways taking us from rocks to sea to distant islands and back to shore again. *Beginner’s Mind* is from a picture in a found book on Ikebana flower arranging. There is also a bit of cultural appropriation with the *Perky Snowlion*, a celestial animal of Tibet, representing fearlessness, joy and eternal playfulness. Appropriation is a problem but it’s also how we put things out in order to take them back in – in the painting and the mind. In fact the Snowlion – who doesn’t fly but whose feet never touch the ground – is an emblem and a means of this putting out/taking in. Within the direct perception of epic vistas, abstraction always finds its moments, vanishing everything in the unknown zone of another painting.

Leidy Churchman (b.1979, Pennsylvania) lives and works in New York and Maine. His work has been recently shown at *Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon*, New Museum, NY (2017-18), Kunstmuseum Bern, a solo show at Kölnischer Kunstverein (2017), *Protuberances* at LAXART (2016), *Lazy River* at Boston University gallery (2013) and extensively at gallery exhibitions. He participated in *Painting: Now and Forever III* that took place between Greene Naftali and Matthew Marks in New York, and *One day at a Time: Manny Farber and Termite Art* at MOCA, Los Angeles. In June 2019, he will have a solo exhibition at Hessel Museum, Bard College. Churchman received his MFA from Columbia University in 2010, and his BA from Hampshire College in 2002. From 2011-12, he was a resident artist at Rijksakademie in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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