

For immediate release

PAINTINGS ON PAPER

June 26 – August 15, 2014

Opening Reception: Thursday, June 26, 6 – 8 pm



Raoul De Keyser
Untitled, 1999
Watercolor on paper
9 1/8 x 12 inches (image)
23 x 30.5 cm

David Zwirner is pleased to present ***Paintings on Paper***, on view at the gallery's 537 West 20th Street location. This group exhibition will highlight artists who, by working in an abstract idiom, implicate the specificity of the paper support and the materiality of paint, and will include work by **Ben Berlow**, **James Bishop**, **Ilse D'Hollander**, **Raoul De Keyser**, **Suzan Frecon**, **Mary Heilmann**, **Paulo Monteiro**, **Rebecca Morris**, **Ad Reinhardt**, **Al Taylor**, and **Stanley Whitney**.

This exhibition will focus on artists who make paintings on paper as an integral part of their practice, rather than as preparatory works. In 1986, James Bishop abandoned making large-scale works on canvas in favor of devoting

himself entirely to more intimately scaled paintings on paper, stating, "I was more interested in...writing with the hand rather than with the arm. I think mostly it was that I could make something that seemed to me much more personal, subjective, and possibly original."¹ Likewise, the artists represented here operate outside of traditional notions of medium specificity, making works that can neither be categorized fully as paintings nor as drawings, but that communicate through their invocation of color, composition, and texture. By privileging the often-alchemical ways that paint and paper interact, these artists create works that are distinctly individual and that reflect an intuitive engagement with process.

While each artist presented in the exhibition has a unique set of references and working method, they are united in their commitment to systematically pushing abstraction to its logical limits by producing works that crinkle, buckle, bend, or flatten under the influence of the artist's hand and his or her chosen media. Within their disparate practices, affinities can be charted and techniques compared and contrasted. Some artists, like **James Bishop (b. 1927)**, **Paulo Monteiro (b. 1961)**, and **Ben Berlow (b. 1980)**, create works that investigate the spatial possibilities of the two-dimensional page. While Bishop utilizes this format to explore contrasts between opacity and transparency, flatness and spatiality, as well as linear tectonics and loosely composed forms, Monteiro produces paintings on paper that, through their non-representational appearance, mine the aesthetic

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possibilities of shape. Berlow's compositions on found paper, meanwhile, activate a sense of depth through the use of richly colored paint, applied thickly in geometrically derived configurations.

Likewise, **Ilse D'Hollander (1968-1997)**, **Rebecca Morris (b. 1969)**, and **Suzan Frecon (b. 1941)** all operate in a more impressionistic register, incorporating the physicality of the interaction between paint and paper as an integral component of the work's content. Frequently referencing landscape, D'Hollander's thick and textural brushstrokes coalesce with the materiality of the support to create works that are both formally coherent and emotionally resonant. Morris, on the other hand, employs the smaller format to work rapidly, and more subconsciously than her larger scale paintings allow, privileging the interaction of the water-based paint with the surface of the paper. Frecon's works, meanwhile, composed with a mixture of dry pigments and watercolor applied to textural, often-found paper, are at once reductive and expressive; she adamantly tries to avoid recognizable pictorial associations or symbolic explanations in order to explore pure abstraction.

Artists like **Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967)**, **Al Taylor (1948-1999)**, and **Stanley Whitney (b. 1946)**, also utilize the openness and flexibility of this format to pursue a more formal vocabulary. Concentrating on the effects of light and color, Reinhardt's non-objective gouaches emphasize his continued preoccupation with reduction and his progressive removal of extraneous gestural expressions—their washed brushwork and overlapping geometric forms create all-over compositions that further illustrate his unfolding preoccupation with the purity of non-objective, abstract art. On the other hand, Taylor, who began his studio practice as a painter, worked back and forth between three-dimensional objects and works on paper in an effort to open up the boundaries of the pictorial plane and to explore two- and three-dimensional space. Similarly, Whitney deploys color and shape to delineate complex visual and conceptual dichotomies, creating works that are visually arresting and intellectually challenging.

Likewise, artists including **Raoul De Keyser (1930-2012)** and **Mary Heilmann (b. 1940)** create aesthetic languages that are uniquely their own. De Keyser's works appear at once straightforward and cryptic, abstract and figurative. Composed of basic but indefinable shapes and marks, his works often invoke spatial and figural illusions, though they remain elusive of any descriptive narrative. Meanwhile, Heilmann's unique style, with its loose brushwork, runny streaks of paint, and visceral color palette, incorporates a complex amalgam of personal references, cultural influences, and aesthetic traditions. Heilmann's work, like those by many of the artists in the show, offers a painterly idiom that points beyond the limitations of abstraction and opens onto an investigation of the possibilities of painting.

1 "Artists should never be seen nor heard," James Bishop in conversation with Dieter Schwarz, in Schwarz and Alfred Pacquement, eds., *James Bishop* (Düsseldorf: Richter Verlag, 1993), p. 36.

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