

PRESS RELEASE

## ABOUT PAINTING

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*About Painting* brings together the work of four artists who have positioned their respective practices 'at arms length' from the erstwhile conventions of painting. These are artists who are nonetheless, fundamentally engaged with a great many painterly concerns. In many respects they are preserving a distance from, or stepping outside, the medium, in order to better comment upon it

This description of 'distance' from the painting act is perhaps most apposite when considering the work of **Lars Morell**. The imagery in Morell's work is not so much painted, as conjured from sprayed mists of colour. The canvas surface functioning like a screen to capture the shadow play projected upon it. The forms revealed by this hands-off approach are equally hard to grasp. Ambiguous and intangible, the imagery, the surface, the *painting* itself is almost impossible to pin down

The touch of the artist's hand is also deferred, and then examined, in the work of **Ross Hansen**. The models for his replica brushstrokes are, in this instance, digital doodles produced on an Ipad touch screen. The resulting images are at once elemental, finger paintings; and hyper-real brush-marks created by an algorithm. These virtual marks are then transported 'back' into the tactile realm via a process of masking and layering that mirrors digital editing software; a kind of physical Photoshop. Often contradictory and cyclic in nature, Hansen makes paintings about making paintings

The play between digital imagery and tactile materiality is even more pronounced in the stitched photographs of **Berend Strik**. There is a tension created by the juxtaposition of manual facture, and reproducible media, that raises questions about originality, the value of labour and hierarchies of media. Strik's expanded notion of painting, or painting via other means, manages to both indulge in all the visual tropes and pleasures of the medium, whilst simultaneously questioning its conventions and status. A dual effect exacerbated by the dialogue, in these works, between the augmented surfaces and the imagery garnered from art history.

**Niek Hendrix's** paintings and installations of paintings also consume, re-package and represent pre-existing imagery. Hendrix is a visual magpie, culling and sampling images from different times and cultures, often compiling them together into disparate cabinets of curiosity. Despite his evident love of painting, Hendrix's own 'hand' is mostly withheld; the works are rendered in a cool, deadpan, anti-gestural manner. Colour is also stripped from the references. Such restraint means that the works are 'activated' all the more by the imagery itself, its associations and the cross relationships established by the different groupings.

All four artists in this show have a complicated relationship to and with painting, with painting as an object, a practice and an institution. For each however, painting represents a paradigm that has to be addressed. It retains a kind of magnetic attraction that demands attention; for above all else, each of these artists is making work *About Painting*.