

rachel uffner

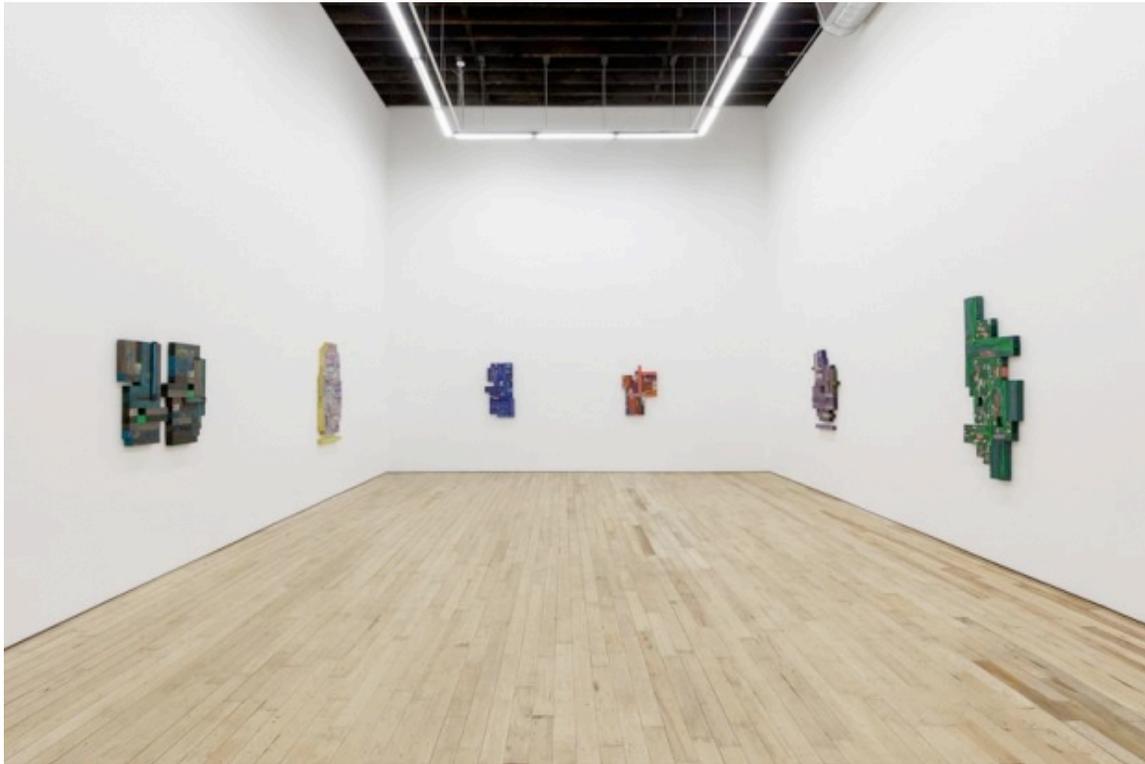
TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

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MFA Sculpture Alumnus, Strauss Bourque-La France has a solo show up now at Rachel Uffner Gallery!

Author: matthews



At first glance, post paintings might seem like an incredibly pretentious name for an exhibition—the kind you roll your eyes at and think, “Jesus, another show about painting.” Well, I’d say it’s not really what you think. Like any decent show about the medium, Strauss’ title is kind of a gag. It’s both about painting and everything painting is not—the catch being the two are always dialectically tethered, in good, postmodern fashion (Derrida in “The Parergon”: “The incomprehensibility of [a] border”). Note how there’s no dash between post and painting, because these “paintings” are literally posts (so many tongues and cheeks here). They’re made of 2” x 2” basswood sections, stacked and latticed in varying configurations. They’re similar to the basswood pieces in his T293 show, USA Objects, and may seem rather dissimilar from his earlier Rachel Uffner outing, with its shiny, laminate surfaces and striped carpeting. But each offers a different, material way to “arrange” a painting, whatever painting means.

In post paintings, many of Strauss’ wood strips are also wrapped in pages of the New York Post—another nod to posts here—but it’s not so apparent. The paper has been scribbled over in acrylic marker, oil stick, and wood stain, and thus—to me at least—looks rather abstract expressionist, like something out of Mad Men—Helen Frankenthaler or Cy Twombly, if they only painted their frames, bones making a body. Is it without organs? They don’t seem to follow any order. The body is everywhere here, though it’s only elliptically addressed. In the collaged groupings, the Post’s pages have been almost entirely covered in various shades of color, save for bits of clothes, hands, torsos, and garbled headlines left exposed—we don’t know whose or which, really. It doesn’t matter. It’s all vaguely sexual and homoerotic, these anonymous bodies and hands, caught in the act of reaching or touching.

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With its references to craft, collage and construction—model boats, buoys,

things like that—post paintings is, if anything very Americana. Strauss grew up in rural Maine after all, surrounded by them. His father painted signs and made furniture for a living, and his mother—when she wasn't lighting up—made trompe-l'œil paintings of things like Grecian vases. So painting is in Strauss' very fiber, even if he doesn't necessarily want it to be, in the brush- and-paint sense. But it's more painting-as-collage, or painting-as-sculpture, or painting-in-the-expanded-field (hey Rosalind Krauss), or image-as-object, object-as-symbol. The iterations are endless and fluid. As I'm writing this, who knows what the show will actually become once he gets in the space, as the space can change everything on a dime. But what does it matter, when everything is, in a way, so interchangeable?