

## **Conor Backman**

727 Warren St., Hudson, NY

August 15th - September 20th

Opening Reception: Saturday, August 15th , 6-8PM

Retrospective is pleased to present, 'Late painter/new paint' , a solo exhibition by Hudson, NY based artist Conor Backman. The works on view engage the temporal nature of painting through references to the history of the medium and to the processes by which paintings store and compress time. Each object in the exhibition incorporates partial re-creations of maritime painting from the mid 19th century, including French Impressionism and American Luminism.

Gustave Caillebotte's *Oarsmen Rowing on the Yerres, 1877*, is recreated in several works. In Backman's largest piece, a new version of Caillebotte's painting has been repainted at its original scale from a compressed JPEG. The composition has been fragmented and reassembled over a monochrome canvas reminiscent of sky or water, based on the default desktop hue of Backman's laptop computer (Solid Aqua Blue). The rearranged configuration exaggerates the jarring perspective and compositional repetition of the original painting while speaking to the fragmented nature of locating and viewing digital imagery.

Backman's interest in Caillebotte's work is both formal and biographical. Caillebotte's disjunctive practice employed shifting styles situated between history painting, impressionism, and proto-cubism; photorealism, and pop art, as well as ship building, gardening, collecting, and the organization of exhibitions. In Caillebotte's work, rowers become an allegory to rapidly shifting social life. Shipping, necessary for all aspects of commerce, was once a staple of cultural identity. For Backman, the ship is analogous to both the activity of a painter and physical structure of a painting. Like painting, it is an activity that is anachronistic, yet remains an ongoing aspect of exchange. In other works, cropped versions of Caillebotte's rowers are paired with painted views of contemporary strip malls near Backman's studio. An update to 19th century Hudson Valley Luminism, here the effects of light are rendered through illuminated billboards, neon signs, and traffic signals.

In another group of works, Backman expands on a series of paintings that incorporate trompe l'oeil "paint," in which physical paint cans are embedded into reproductions of figurative paintings. The cans, set between layers of glass and paint, break the surface of both painting and frame. Like a building built in the shape of the product it offers, the paint cans function as a conceptual loop, emanating at the horizon. The material object oscillates between painting and sculpture, operating as both a mirrored window into the world and pure abstraction, in stasis and perpetually new.

Backman's exhibition will run concurrently with an exhibition of works by Trudy Benson and Russell Tyler at 711 Warren St., Hudson, NY.

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