

press information

August 2008

Josh Smith

Zurich Abstraction

August 30 to October 11, 2008

Opening: Friday, August 29, 6 - 8 pm

Galerie Eva Presenhuber is delighted to present, for the first time, a solo exhibition by young American artist Josh Smith (born 1976). Josh Smith grew up in Tennessee and is now living in New York. His promising career includes solo shows in Paris, Oslo, Brussels, New York, and Chicago. His artistic path, which has reached its latest pinnacle in a now running solo exhibition at the Vienna Museum of Modern Art, has been marked by group shows such as "USA Today" at the Saatchi Gallery, "Uncertain States of America" at the Serpentine Gallery, as well as a participation in the Lyon Biennial, curated by Hans-Ulrich Obrist and Stéphanie Moisdon. At Galerie Eva Presenhuber, the artist will be represented with an ensemble of new abstract paintings that he displays in Zurich.

Like no other artistic genre, painting is under constant pressure to justify itself. This does not only speak against, but also – very strongly, in fact – for it. Whoever chooses to paint today, acts within a system of reference that guarantees their art historical depth and semantic complexity. Whoever chooses to paint today, is, without a doubt, a conceptual artist. This is certainly true of Josh Smith, who orients himself towards the central myths of modern painting. The work that he has produced so far is divided into different groups of works characterized by specific methods and visual contents.

Josh Smith became known through his so-called *Name Paintings*, in which his name appears in ever-changing variations as a central motif, which reflects the search for a distinctive artistic identity. If, however, all one has to offer is a run-of-the-mill name such as Josh Smith, the chances of getting noticed immediately as a great artist are not exactly good. Of course, Josh Smith makes no secret of this, for the egocentrism that he celebrates is nothing but a pretext. Rather than functioning as content, it is a reason to engage in a practice that is open to experiments by trying out various styles and thereby demonstrating the irrationality of the idea of distinctiveness, even though, or precisely because, this practice explicitly bears some sort of trademark. In the *Collages*, too – where Smith combines found materials, such as excerpts from newspapers or menu cards from take-away shops, with his own drawings, posters and things from his studio–, critical attention is given to the myth of artistic authenticity. His *Announcement Paintings* on the other hand, which are characterized by a subversive way of dealing with the literal meaning of being 'original', display Josh Smith's experience with printing techniques: the silkscreen paintings show traces of an artistic trademark that present a sharp

contrast to the seriality inherent in this medium of reproduction. With their focus on a preparatory stage of painting, the *Palette Paintings* revolve around the process of making art itself.

His most recent body of work, on which the selection for the exhibition at Galerie Eva Presenhuber is based, is plainly titled *Abstraction*. A few words suffice to explain the underlying methodical principle: Josh Smith has created a small series of prototypical schemes for abstract painting that he can vary without any effort and in every conceivable shade of color. His gesticulatory brushstrokes manifest themselves as an allusion to Abstract Expressionism. Yet, with Smith being a heir to (rather than a contemporary of) that movement, everything appears different or, so to speak, understated. The ingenious gestures of those once wildly celebrated heroes have therefore given way to both an obvious repetitiveness of the form and an impurity, if not muddiness associated with colors. The way how Josh Smith takes up milestones in the history of art may seem disillusioning at first. With the unbiased lightness and the subtle humor typical of his approach, though, he performs a long overdue act of release: Josh Smith paints the corset that restricts art while, at the same time, liberating art from it.

For further information, please contact Thomas Jarek at Galerie Eva Presenhuber.

In parallel with this exhibition, Galerie Eva Presenhuber will present a show by Mark Handforth.

Opening hours:	Tuesday - Friday	12 noon - 6 pm
	Saturday	11 am - 5 pm

Further exhibition by Josh Smith:	Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig (MUMOK), Vienna, <i>Hidden Darts</i> , July 7 - September 21, 2008
-----------------------------------	---

Upcoming exhibitions at the gallery:	Karen Kilimnik, October 25 - December 20, 2008 Opening: Friday, October 24, 6 - 8 pm
--------------------------------------	---

	Urs Fischer, October 25 - December 20, 2008 Opening: Friday, October 24, 6 - 8 pm
--	--