

Urs Fischer

05 June – 16 August 2014
 69 South Audley St London W1
 Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm

This summer, Sadie Coles HQ presents an exhibition of new paintings by Urs Fischer. It is the first show that he has dedicated exclusively to painting, and comprises four large-scale works that signal a significant new approach to the medium.

In each picture, abstract paintwork appears superimposed on a photographic reproduction of an interior. Striking across the canvases in vivid spatters and squeegee-style flourishes, the painterly schemes almost completely eradicate the underlying imagery. Each painted-over photograph is of a space

inhabited by the artist (three were taken at his home in Los Angeles while the fourth is of his studio in Brooklyn), following in a long tradition of paintings which depict the artist's everyday environment. But as with a defaced picture or painted-over billboard, only fragmentary glimpses of these 'still life' scenes remain.



The abstract overlay is itself however a photographic mirage. The surface of each work has the pristine finish of a screen print rather than the thick impasto relief we might expect: gestural abstraction has been supplanted by a gestureless simulacrum. A turbulent style of painting that perhaps now seems overblown or hackneyed has been translated – by digital and mechanical sleights of hand – into a photographic foil. Fischer in this way compels us to view the 'painting' from a remove, showing us an image of abstraction rather than an abstraction per se. Moreover, in a reversal of Abstract Expressionism's connotations of emotive individualism, abstraction here only eclipses the artist's personal world.

The process of obstruction at work in the four pictures recalls Fischer's separate series of 'Problem Paintings'. In these, a giant headshot – often reminiscent of a matinee idol – is abruptly blocked by another, often jarring, image (a hovering piece of fruit, vegetable, cigarette, or bent screw). While those works suggest a Dada-style pile-up of everyday imagery, the new paintings enact a more violent and total erasure. Seeming to play upon the concept of 'painting after photography' by literally painting photography away, they in fact subsume painting into a photographic image.

The new works draw together two modes that have featured prominently in Fischer's oeuvre, still life and abstraction. In a series of room-sized wallpaper installations, he has created life-size facsimiles of actual rooms (for example *Oscar the Grouch* at the Brant Foundation, Connecticut, 2010-11); and furniture has figured repeatedly in his sculpture as an anthropomorphic device. Sculptures such as his series *David the Proprietor* – cast aluminium enlargements of hand-modelled clay forms – have meanwhile translated *art brut* abstraction onto a monumental scale. These new paintings also reflect a long-running fixation with insubstantiality (manifested for instance in *You*, 2007 – a vast excavated void in the gallery floor). The fact of the paint *not being there* is in tune with the double-edged nature of much of Fischer's art, in which the most grandiose gestures frequently carry a sense of their potential to deflate.

Urs Fischer (b. Switzerland, 1973) lives in New York. Recent major exhibitions include those at MOCA, Los Angeles, 2013; *Madame Fisscher*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, Italy, 2012; and *Skinny Sunrise*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, 2012. He has had solo shows throughout Europe and the USA, including *Oscar the Grouch*, The Brant Foundation, Greenwich (CT) (2010) and *Marguerite de Ponty*, New Museum, New York (2009). In 2004, *Not My House Not My Fire* took place at Espace 315, Centre Pompidou, Paris, and the retrospective *Kir Royal* was held at Kunsthaus Zürich, Switzerland. Urs Fischer's work has been included in numerous group exhibitions including the Venice Biennale in 2003, 2007, and 2011.

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