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Jeff Elrod “Figment” at Vito Schnabel Gallery, St. Moritz

By Chiara Moioli | January 11, 2017



© Jeff Elrod; Courtesy of the artist; Luhring Augustine, New York; Vito Schnabel Gallery. Photo by Stefan Altenburger.

Vito Schnabel Gallery is pleased to present “Figment”, an exhibition of new paintings by Jeff Elrod. Jeff Elrod is an American abstract painter who employs both digital and analog processes to create his work. Using Photoshop and other drawing programs he draws and reworks imagery that he then renders on canvas; often by hand, using acrylic paints, tape, and airbrush. He also prints his computer generated images directly onto canvas. Elrod advances an argument that is committed to the formal values of painting while inserting an unsettling psychological undertow to his imagery.

Elrod began painting abstractions inspired by super graphics and video game imagery in the early 1990s. In 1997, as a means to distance himself from his conscious mind, he began to use the computer to facilitate paintings through a technique he calls “frictionless drawing.” The computer allows for the production of lines and color fields without the direct intervention of the artist’s hand, thus allowing him the freedom to experiment and engage in “a digital breed of automatic writing.” In a body of work inspired by artist and poet Brion Gysin’s “dream machine” project, he evokes the hallucinatory effects intended by Gysin’s machine by processing his original drawings into blurred images to create all over fields of colored soft cloud like forms that resist focus.

This exhibition includes a selection of new “blur” paintings by Elrod. In the “shard blur” paintings, the violence of sharp fractured shapes are cut into unfocused biomorphic forms that create an intense retinal effect. The “blur” paintings represent a different kind of painterly space that Elrod refers to as screen-space... a shallow, compressed kind of space that alludes to the screen and our visual relationship to personal screen culture i.e.; smartphones, TV’s, and computers screens. The genealogy of postwar abstraction joins the development of new technologies in this new body of work.

Images in these paintings often reveal an uncanny disturbance within the ordinary: lines and doodles that had in earlier abstraction transmitted eroticism, biomorphism, and coded surrealism are further disembodied into a trail of anthropomorphic digital specters that both seduce and haunt.