

Wallpaper*

Take a hike: Sterling Ruby's latest solo show is inspired by mountain rambles

By Elly Parsons | March 21, 2017



Installation view of 'Modern Hiker', by Sterling Ruby, 2017. © Sterling Ruby.

Master of variety Sterling Ruby seems addicted to testing out new mediums. His artistic diversity knows no bounds. Through his sculptures, installations, paintings, ceramics and textiles, he somehow manages to flit between myriad artistic styles, from expressionism to minimalism to vandalism.

Despite his mind-bendingly disparate practice, Ruby's artworks share an urgency and a sense of disquieting material manipulation. There's an air of anxiety. It might come as a surprise, then, that his latest solo exhibition at Switzerland's Vito Schnabel Gallery revolves around a peaceful, pastoral pastime – going for a walk.

Ruby's primary inspiration for this exhibition was the landscape of the Engadin, a picturesque Alpine valley region in the eastern Swiss Alps, where the gallery is based, amid a network of walking trails. The idea came about, explains gallery founder and director Vito Schnabel, in December 2015 when Ruby presented two large-scale, functioning wood-burning stoves in a garden at the Kulm Hotel, located across the street from the gallery. 'He came over to install the works and to be there for the opening of the gallery. He loved the area and we began planning his first exhibition here.'

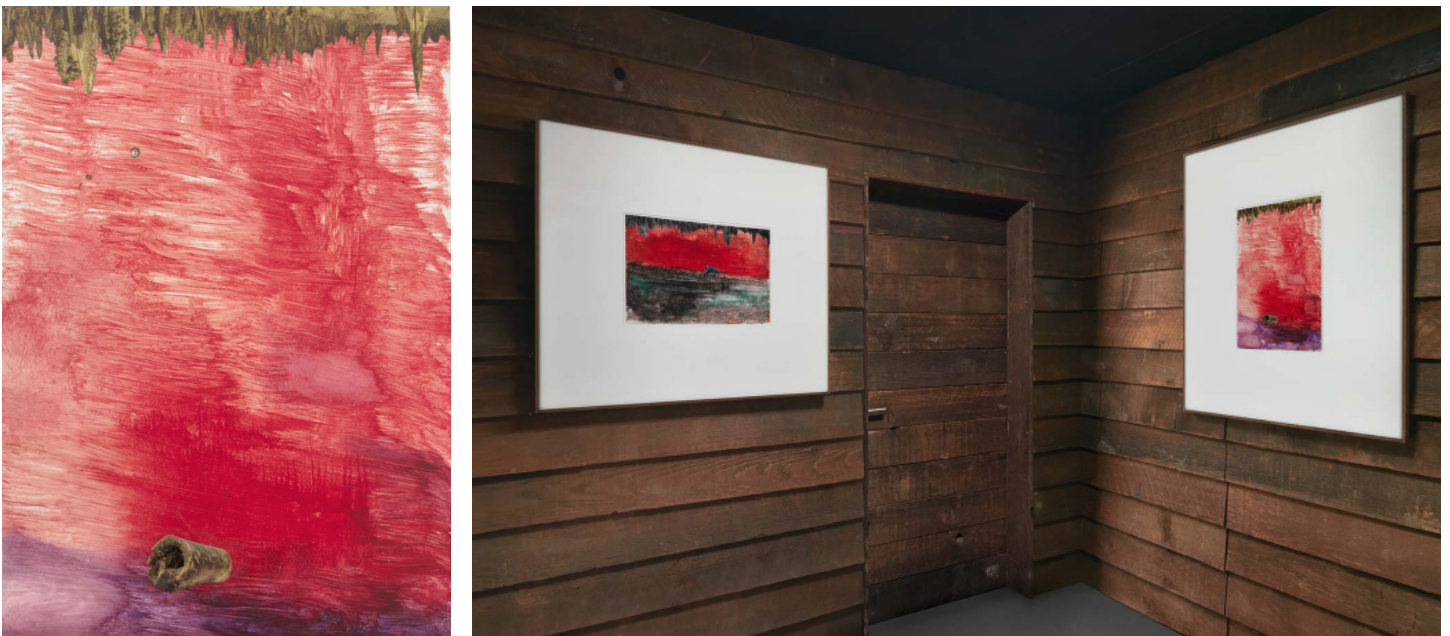
There's an awe and sublimity to the surroundings that Ruby captures, drawing upon his own fractious aesthetic. As such, the same nervous energy that has categorised previous works finds its way into this showcase. 'He represents hiking abstractly, through the colours and shapes of the sun and the moon and the mountains,' explains Schnabel. 'In the collages, you can see the jagged peaks that line the edges.'

In traditional Ruby style, the show spans various media – paintings, bronze sculptures, collages, ceramics and a mobile. This could ring alarm bells for a curator. Not so here, says Schnabel. 'Curation was not much of an issue in this show, as Sterling had a very clear idea of what he wanted to do. During install it was just a matter of figuring out what went where.'

Because of this natural, almost effortless curatorial approach, each piece converses with the next beautifully. Indeed, the diversity of works on display only seems to emphasise the varied, weather-beaten landscapes Ruby rambled through in search of inspiration.



L to R: Sterling Ruby has filled the Vito Schnabel Gallery with a range of artistic media; Half Tetrad (6391), 2017 © Sterling Ruby



L to R: 'DRFTRS (6347)', 2017. © Sterling Ruby Photo: Robert Wedmeyer; DRFTRS (6349), 2017 and DRFTRS (6350), 2017. © Sterling Ruby; Photos: courtesy Sterling Ruby Studio and Vito Schnabel Gallery. Photography: Stefan Altenburger.