

Dan Walsh *Still*

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Still

by *Samuel Gross*

For this exhibition at the gallery Tschudi, Dan Walsh has chosen the title *Still*. Without a particular context, the word «still» has several meanings. But I'd suggest keeping just two, to make the works on paper and the large canvas in this exhibition a little more your own.

«Still» as an adjective refers to calmness. It's quite clear that the particular care taken in the gesture, without erasure, almost suspended, is one of the distinguishing features of Dan Walsh's work. In this sense, we seem to perceive the act of painting as a form, if not of meditation, at least of the silent unfolding of a gesture.

Works on paper seem to carry the memory of both the artist's hand and the tool. Indeed, in a black and white series shown in the exhibition, the line system becomes more complex as the bristles of the brush bond together, fragmenting the trace it leaves. You can almost imagine the sound, the squeaks that the different passages of the brush might have made on paper. The drawing becomes physical and almost sonorous.

In another series, the color doesn't seem to adhere completely to the paper, but instead glides over it. Of course, this is not the case, and it's the artist who produces this blurred effect through the shift effect, as if our eye needed some calm to reconstitute spatial depth. So «still» understood as an adjective could apply not only to the artist, but also to the viewer. As if to suggest that the seemingly simple structure of Dan Walsh's work is in tune with the most sophisticated motifs of our dreams.

In a recent book, Dan Walsh published a series of photographs of the slow process leading to his paintings. It's easy to see how his work could be likened to that of a weaver. Weaving is a strangely paradoxical space of rhythm, silence, mechanical noise, texture, gesture and repetition based on a grid system.

Metaphorically, there occurs a semantic shift towards «still» as an adverb. Repetition, progression and projection then give way to silence. Although never based on a pre-existing drawing, Dan Walsh's painting slowly emerges into a clear, determined system. Here, the delicate tone is tinged with humor. The structure is set, but fantasy emerges through repetition and glide. The canvas seems to play with the same balance as an improvisation.

Like the best actors, Dan Walsh uses a seemingly simple system that he has mastered to perfection to create a grid between us and the world, in

which all the images that pave our memory are sometimes incongruously classified. In the absence of anything better, and admitting a slight lack of taste, I have only one thing to say to him : *I'm still loving you* ... like in the song.

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Dan Walsh (b. 1960, Philadelphia, US) studied at the Philadelphia College of Art, Pennsylvania and Hunter College, New York. In 2019, his work was shown in a year-long solo exhibition at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht (NL), co-hosted with the Jan van Eyck Academie. His artistic output has been the subject of numerous exhibitions, including at P.S.1 Contemporary Art Centre in Long Island City, the New Museum in New York, the Centre National d'Art Contemporain in Nice, the Speerstra Foundation in Lausanne, the RISD Museum of Art in Providence, Rønnebaeksholm, Naestved, Villa du Parc, Annemasse and Kunstverein Medienturm, Graz. Walsh participated in the 2003 Biennial of Ljubljana, Slovenia, as well as the Biennial of Contemporary Art in Lyon, France, and the 2014 Whitney Biennial. His work is included in major collections including the Art Institute of Chicago, Museum of Modern Art New York, Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Victoria & Albert Museum in London and the Musée d'art Moderne et Contemporain in Geneva.