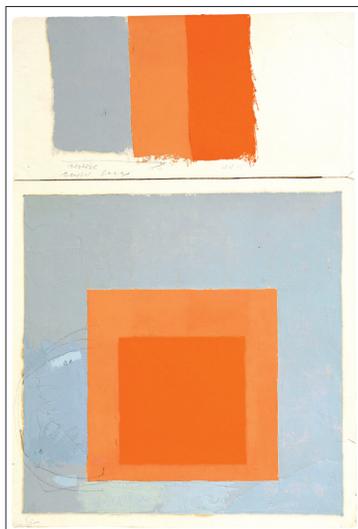


## Josef Albers

Kunstmuseum Basel

Basel

During his tenure at the Bauhaus, where he studied and taught from 1920 to 1933, Josef Albers put forth his conviction that the starting point of any artwork should be the physical properties of



Josef Albers, *Study for Homage to the Square with Color Study, n.d.*, oil on blotting paper, 17½" x 11½". Kunstmuseum Basel.

its raw components. In this context, he viewed paper as a medium that invited experimentation: an optimal construction material, it can be cut and folded, or serve as a unique support for painting.

This insightful exhibition, titled "Painting on Paper—Josef Albers in America," presented more than 70 works, all produced between the artist's emigration to the United States in 1933 and his death in 1976. They ranged from studies to finished works, demonstrating Albers's approach to color and material.

The artist's encounters with adobe structures, Mayan pyramids, and the vivid colors of Mexico, a frequent travel destination, inspired his "Adobes" and "Kinetics" series of the late 1930s and '40s and had an influence on his later work. Neatly organized color fields, as seen in the *Variant/Adobe, Study for Four Central Warm Colors Surrounded by 2 Blues* (ca. 1948), recall the design—notably the doorways and windows—of the solid mud-brick buildings.

In the "Homage to the Square" series, which Albers executed from 1950 onward, the artist focused on subtle gradations of color. Superimposing square upon square, he intensified the interplay between hues—here mostly in the yellow-orange range—to create a sense of spatial depth. He worked on heavy blotting paper, which absorbed the oil from the paint, resulting in a dry layer of glowing color. Some of these meticulous works have handwritten notes in the margins and in the color fields, letting the viewer in on Albers's process. They read like annotated visual poetry. —**Mary Krienke**

On view through April 30 at the Centre Pompidou, Paris, the exhibition will travel to the Centro de Arte Moderna, Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon, and the Morgan Library and Museum, New York.

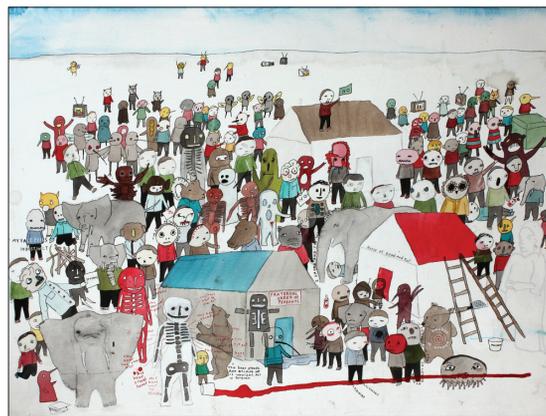
## Neil Farber

Pippy Houldsworth

London

Titled "Ursa Major," this uneven show brought together work made by Neil Farber since the 2008 dissolution of the Royal Art Lodge, a Winnipeg-based art collective whose members also included Marcel Dzama and Michael Dumontier, among others. Judging from these paintings, all from 2011, Farber is pressing forward with the deliberately naive idiom and air of absurdist, postmodern anxiety that made the collective's style so distinctive.

The results sometimes smartly recall the Lodge's best, most unsettling work. In *Fraternal Order of Peasants*, an assemblage of cute but vaguely creepy figures, houses, and ladders tips into a sense of dystopian unease. The sprawling, six-



Neil Farber, *Fraternal Order of Peasants, 2011*, mixed media on birch, 30" x 40". Pippy Houldsworth.

and-a-half-foot-long *Mouse*, executed on birch, shows an army of pale schematic figures that look like they wandered in from a Tim Burton film mixed with stains, felt-tip marker lines, newspaper collage, and printed words that offer cryptic messages or the names of Canadian prairie locales ("Medicine Hat," "Manitoba," "Regina"). Other works seemed repetitive or suffered from a certain lack of compassion, with masses of undifferentiated, ghostlike figures and little else.

There was not much in this show to tell us where Farber might be going next. But it did remind us why the Royal Art Lodge artists were such oddball successes. In their work, children seem to be playing adult stage roles, as in Farber's *Untitled (Out Behind)*, in which freakish youngsters and puppetlike animal figures pose in a kind of surrealist pantomime. Farber brings his cast of characters together nicely in *Untitled (Book)*, 2011, a paper work that unfurled on a shelf like an accordion, where men with animal heads, skeletons, and adolescents line up for a curtain call. —**Roger Atwood**

## Enoc Perez

Faggionato Fine Arts

London

This fascinating show, titled "Nudes," marked a significant shift in the work of Enoc Perez. Over the course of two decades, the Puerto Rican-born, New York-based artist developed a brushless painting technique, applying paint to the back of drawings, made on separate sheets, then transferring the images onto canvas. He has used this method, which blurs the distinction between printmaking and painting, to generate relatively realistic works. Though the artist's hand is distanced, the results differ from the smoothness typical of Pop art.

Here Perez let himself go, pushing the multitransfer process to the limit. He employed oil stick to build his surfaces in a manner reminiscent of Richard Serra, used color freely, and even applied paint directly with a brush. His subject was the female nude, blown up beyond lifesize. Despite their imposing scale, these Amazons seem dangerously close to getting lost: some behind masses of foliage, others simply in the blizzard of transfers.



Enoc Perez, *Nude, June 2011*, oil on canvas, 80" x 60". Faggionato Fine Arts.

Paradoxically, the more the image was applied, the less it can be detected.

Obviously the painterly history of the nude is invoked, though Perez's source images are amateur pornography. This fit with the voyeuristic feel of the show, which encouraged peering through the layers to glimpse the women within. Yet, in another neat paradox, one could also look at the artist's process as the opposite of a striptease, making the flesh successively harder to see.

What one was left with wasn't the provocative, corporeal aspect of Perez's nudes, but the excitement he clearly derived from using his technical process to activate and obscure his subjects.

—Paul Carey-Kent

## 'Miró, Monet, Matisse'

Kunsthau Zurich

Zurich

More than 100 paintings from the private collection of the Monaco-based Nahmad family—whose second generation includes two cousins, both named Helly, who run blue-chip galleries in New York and London—were shown together for the first time in surroundings far more harmonious with their esthetic merits than the bonded warehouse in Geneva where they usually reside. Kunsthau director and exhibition curator Christoph Becker, together with the London-based Helly Nahmad, made the selections from the family's extensive holdings.

The exhibition, which covered the

period from 1870 to 1970, was divided into thematic segments: Impressionism, Fauvism, Cubism, abstraction, and Surrealism. Passing through a selection of paintings by Monet, Degas, Toulouse-Lautrec, and Renoir, the viewer was confronted by Picasso's charming *Le Petit pierrot aux fleurs* (Harlequin with Flowers, 1923–24), a portrait of the artist's son dressed in a harlequin costume, acquired by the Nahmads in 1988.

While Picasso was the most commanding presence—30 paintings in all, representing several phases of his career—a particularly strong grouping of Modiglianis, a spectacular pairing of Kandinsky's *Studie zu Improvisation 3* (Study for Improvisation 3, 1909) and Malevich's *Suprematist Composition* (1916), and Matisse's *Portrait au manteau bleu* (Portrait in a Blue Coat, 1935) also stood out. A



Kazimir Malevich, *Suprematist Composition*, 1916, oil on canvas, 34" x 28". Kunsthau Zurich.

powerful selection of works by Miró, including *Oiseau dans la nuit* (Bird in the Night, 1967), ended the show on an explosive note.

Was this exhibition a shrewd marketing maneuver, as some have surmised, on the part of the savvy dealers? Regardless, this expertly staged show highlighted some pivotal moments in modern art.

—Mary Krienke

## Amy Sillman

Capitain Petzel

Berlin

Amy Sillman further honed her distinctly gestural approach to painting in this stimulating exhibition, titled "Thumb Cinema." Recent oil paintings were shown alongside a digitally animated sequence

of over 2,000 drawings the artist made on her iPhone, ink-jet print "stills" from the film, and three charcoal drawings.

In the magnetic *DUEL* (2011), an oil on canvas, faded scrawls of grayish green lines punctuate a chipper yellow field infused with lime greens. A dark line, seemingly balanced by a pair of gloves hanging over it, vertically bisects the canvas. *WHITE SLOT* (2011) features a small, off-kilter white rectangle that manages to persistently draw the eye away from the gray, fuchsia, emerald-green, and dark-orange shapes surrounding it. Violet outlines harmonize the wild palette. These vibrant violet marks also appear in *CLUBFOOT* (2011), where twisted elbows, bent knees, curled hands, and a swollen foot come together in an awkward jumble.

Sillman seamlessly translated her painterly obsessions into a dynamic seven-minute silent digital animation, titled *Pinky's Rule* (2011). Animals, human figures, and a parade of other shapes and objects cavort across the screen. The artist's dense colors and heavy lines seem to come to life. A sort of freeze-frame version was on view in a small room on the second floor of the gallery, where 143 single drawings—or "stills"—from the animated sequence were tacked in a grid that covered the walls from floor to ceiling. The installation brilliantly captured moments of flux from the film.

More than anything, it seemed that Sillman wanted her audience to delight in this show, taking pleasure in her imaginative whimsy and chaos. Whether rendering sweeping brushstrokes on canvas or drawing on the screen of her iPhone, the artist expertly melded abstraction, humor, and gesture.

—Alicia Reuter



Amy Sillman, *CLUBFOOT*, 2011, oil on canvas, 91" x 83". Capitain Petzel.