

Smith, Roberta
"Art in Review: Tom Friedman"
The New York Times.
Friday, August 1, 2014. p. C23.

LUHRING AUGUSTINE

531 West 24th Street
New York NY 10011
tel 212 206 9100 fax 212 206 9055
www.luhringaugustine.com

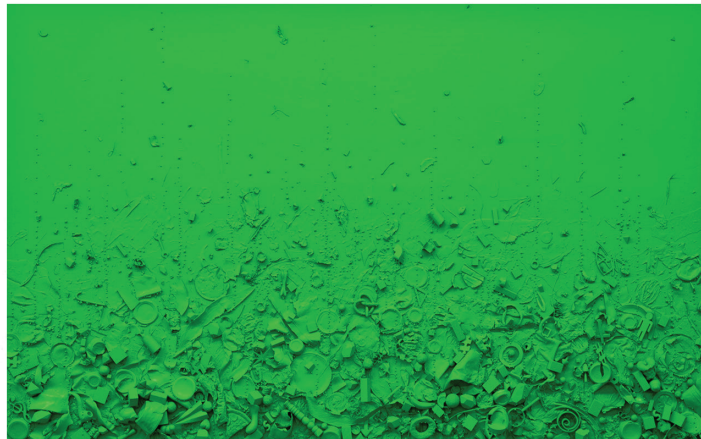
Tom Friedman

'Paint and Styrofoam'

*Luhring Augustine Bushwick
25 Knickerbocker Avenue, at
Ingraham Street, Bushwick,
Brooklyn
Through Aug. 23*

The artist Tom Friedman tends to blow our minds and then move on, rarely repeating himself. (A starburst made of toothpicks or a realistic fly, having seemingly alighted on the corner of a pedestal, come to mind.) Nearly each artwork is some one-off feat of concept, technique and common materials. So it's unexpected to see Mr. Friedman staying in one place as he does here and to realize that the effect is even more intense.

This show is suffused with the tension of trying to reconcile what you see with the exhibi-



TOM FRIEDMAN AND LUHRING AUGUSTINE, NEW YORK

tion's title: "Paint and Styrofoam." Whether painting or sculpture, every work in this show uses these two materials. Their names buzz around in your head with almost no place to land, as you try to figure out

where one material stops and the other begins, or what you are looking at in the first place. This is especially true of the monochrome, seemingly abstract paintings that line the walls. (Fittingly, one work consists of a tiny eyeball wedged into a corner, easy to overlook.)

Minus the show's title, other sculptures are determinedly, but also conventionally, trompe l'oeil, especially the wood stool, guitar and disconnected microphone of "Moot" and the purple (Jeff Koons-like) balloon of "Purple Balloon." But "Pepto Bismol Pink" — an attenuated ganglion of vaguely intestinal shape — deviates. A divot in its white pedestal reveals Styrofoamish blue, probably before you even focus on it.

Each of the paintings has a different subject, effect and surface, and a title alluding to its particu-

"Toxic Green Luscious Green," a 2014 work by Tom Friedman in his show "Paint and Styrofoam."

lar secrets. The cream-colored "Kid" presents a fastidious canvas weave, a strip frame, a big swipe of paint and a tiny ball (a recurring motif), intimating a smiling (or smiley) face. The swirling brushwork of the dark blue "Night" yields part of van Gogh's "Starry Night," just as the artist's visage can be found in the bright yellow of "Self Portrait."

And so on, from one vision-testing surface to the next. The simplest is "Blue Styrofoam Seascape," whose central ridge coalesces into a perfectly atmospheric horizon. And Mr. Friedman breaks free of flatness in "Blue" and "Toxic Green Luscious Green," creating bas-relief pileups of objects, trash and words that include Styrofoam peanuts — previously a favored material — and other references to his singular career.

ROBERTA SMITH