

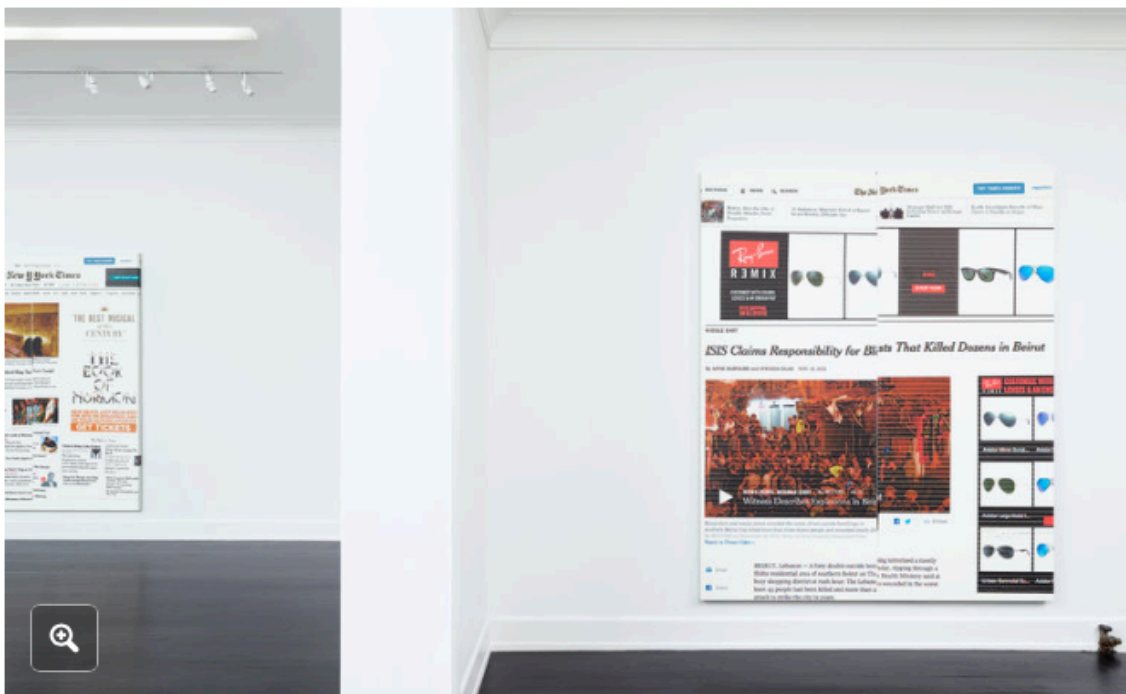
Petzel

Jason Farago, “Wade Guyton Packs Information in ‘The New York Times Paintings,’” *The New York Times*, January 5, 2017.

The New York Times

Wade Guyton Packs Information in ‘The New York Times Paintings’

By JASON FARAGO JAN. 5, 2017



An installation view of “The New York Times Paintings: November-December 2015” at Petzel Gallery. Courtesy of the artist and Ron Amstutz, Petzel, New York

All the news that’s fit to paint can be found in the exhibition by Wade Guyton, at the uptown branch of [Petzel Gallery](#). This sly American painter, subject of a poker-faced, challenging [retrospective](#) at the Whitney Museum of American Art in 2012, came to prominence for his printed canvases of black stripes, licking flames and stand-alone Xs and Us, whose repetitive computer imagery was made strange through imprecise edges and wonky ink saturations. But these new works, in contrast to his earlier minimal compositions, are packed with information, as they draw their imagery from ... well, from the website you’re now reading. (Or, if you are in the habit of reading print, this newspaper’s digital version.)

The series is “The New York Times Paintings: November-December 2015,” though to call

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these works paintings is to give half the game away. Mr. Guyton does not use brushes, but rather produces designs as digital files and outputs them to a large inkjet printer. As with Andy Warhol’s silk screens or [Christopher Wool’s early stencils](#), his paintings make a virtue of suppressing the artist’s hand; where Warhol once said he wanted to paint “like a machine,” Mr. Guyton really does it. But just as Warhol never really gave up artistic control when embracing mechanical methods, Mr. Guyton, too, finds a voice in seeming automation. Even the simplest of digital gestures — once typing the letter X, now taking a millisecond’s screenshot — has some artistic motive, and the translation from JPEG to canvas introduces its own formal kinks.

His current printer, an Epson 9900, is 44 inches wide, and the paintings here are each 69 inches wide; the canvas, therefore, must be folded and go through the machine twice, which results in a disjunctive central seam. The canvas scrunches as it passes through the printer (intended for thinner papers), so that the words “York Times,” in one painting, drip into the section navigation bar.

Frequent shortages of printer ink — far pricier than oil or acrylic paints [or even Krug Champagne](#) — leave illustrations gashed by horizontal white bands. And the relatively low resolution of the screenshots produces strange chromatic effects when blown up to gallery scale. The black digital headlines of The Times, set in the Georgia web font rather than the lighter Cheltenham customarily seen in print, have undertones of iridescent blue. Gray bylines become hazy, and the letters emulsify into one another.

Only one painting reproduces an article: “[ISIS Claims Responsibility for Blasts That Killed Dozens in Beirut](#),” written by Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad and published online on Nov. 12, 2015. The article features an eyewitness video from Reuters, which appears here both striated, thanks to low ink, and bisected at the painting’s center. The same striations infect the other images in the painting, of Ray-Ban sunglasses promoted in two large banner ads. Pointing up a disjunction between brutal news and unrelated advertising is familiar, even platitudinous. But in painted form, the white grooves across both the ruined building and the polished aviator frames make the pairing especially jarring.

The other six paintings here reflect the [nytimes.com](#) home page. Three of them stutteringly reproduce the page from Dec. 1, 2015, whose lead article concerned the gunman at a Colorado branch of Planned Parenthood; on Dec. 4 and Dec. 5 of that year, the top story was the attacks in San Bernardino, Calif.; and only one painting, from Nov. 30, has a lighter lead, [about King Tut’s tomb](#). The home page fits ever so naturally into Mr. Guyton’s regular color scheme of black, white and a few cool colors, though these paintings introduce photographs and other representational elements into an oeuvre that has skewed more abstract. In the top-right corner of most of the works is the artist’s

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nytimes.com login, wguyton1 — a substitute signature, and a rare bit of Duchampian humor from a usually deadpan artist. (Further Times paintings go on view [later this month](#) in a retrospective at the Museum Brandhorst, in Munich.)

Mr. Guyton’s new works owe a heavy, even slavish debt to Warhol’s “Death and Disaster” series, in which that Pop artist first painted by hand the front pages of The New York Post and The New York Mirror (“[129 Die in Jet!](#)”), and later silk-screened gruesome pictures in numbing repetitions. The best of Mr. Guyton’s paintings here features an explicit Warhol tribute: an image of the San Bernardino terrorists’ abandoned S.U.V. runs across the central seam, and the smaller half of the picture is tilted about 10 degrees off the horizontal, just as in Warhol’s many images of car crashes.

Beyond the day’s stories, however, artists have often used (print) newspapers as metonymies for the flow and acceleration of information. The Cubist collages of [Picasso](#), [Braque](#) and [Gris](#) souped up still lifes with stock prices, horse-racing results and classified ads. Later, [Dieter Roth](#) mashed copies of British tabloids like [The Daily Mirror](#) into sausage filling, as if information was a kind of cheap nourishment. The artist Pope.L took that sentiment even further with “[Eating The Wall Street Journal](#)” (1991-2000), performances in which he swallowed and regurgitated that paper, turning information into both food and poison.

Mr. Guyton’s paintings are in that vein, too, though they do not depict pages of a newspaper at all — they depict the website of a media company that publishes news in many formats. That is a significant difference. [As he told The Times](#) in 2012, “I chose the computer because it was right here” — and while making screenshots of the website permits this least emotional of painters a rare dose of topicality, Mr. Guyton also treats nytimes.com as a kind of default, like the letters X or U. His “Times” paintings are as concerned with the baseline by which we encounter and absorb all information as they are with the news itself, and they’re most powerful when the visceral is drowned in the mundane, as in his San Bernardino painting. Then again, if you want to see the day’s news preserved in ink, The Times charges you only \$2.50.

Wade Guyton: The New York Times Paintings: November-December 2015

Through Jan. 14 at Petzel Gallery, 35 East 67th Street, Manhattan; 212-680-9467, [petzel.com](#).

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https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/05/arts/design/wade-guyton-packs-information-in-the-new-york-times-paintings.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/&_r=1