



*By Fiona Connolly*

Is painting dead? Some have argued that it is. In 1975, ArtForum printed an (admittedly biased) survey of opinions from current artists for an article entitled *Painters Reply* which essentially condemned painting as a dead medium. However, the art form has been reinvented and stretched to encompass far more than the traditional media that come to mind when one ponders the subject. Brushes have been swapped for VR coding, and palettes discarded as art became larger and used unconventional materials like bike wheels, steel cables, car radios, etc. For some, moving forward with painting meant leaving behind the genres of the past. Greene Naftali Gallery's *7 Painters* seeks to refute this judgment with some of the best contemporary paintings, each influential and inventive in their own right. The exhibition features Michaela Eichwald, Nicole Eisenman, Charline von Heyl, Jacqueline Humphries, Albert Oehlen, Chris Ofili and Laura Owens. Each artist chooses to explore different themes, different styles, and come from different backgrounds. In fact, their innovation is their only commonality.



Installation view, 7 Painters, Greene Naftali, New York, 2019

The paintings on view range from figurative to abstract, each with their own feelings and subjects. For example, Laura Owen's *Untitled* (2019) is a non-figural large scale screenprint that she has transformed using oils and charcoal. By utilizing multiple techniques, Owen is able to elevate her art, redesigning what painting is by nature. elements that is lost through the 2-D rendering of her painting in photos is the amazing 3-D quality of the thick oil painting she squeezes and dabs about the linen canvas. This is particularly impactful due to the flat screen print the paint sits upon. Her paint colors are notably more vivid and saturated than the screen print's ink is which helps to emphasize the presence of the different materials all on one canvas. The strokes of paint combined with the sporadic and graphic cross hatching create a freeing sensation, almost as if the elements are looking to escape the static environment photo print.

Owens' painting varies greatly from the work by Jacqueline Humphries it is put into conversation with on its left. Titled "☁️)", Humphries' painting is non-figurative and completely abstracted, with a very limited color scheme. "☁️)" is based on creating an atmosphere and feeling through the painting – it is not about how the paint is used, as with *Untitled*. The fact that it is a painting just lends itself to the artist's vision for the concept execution. "☁️)" wraps the viewer in the deep night sky, which is never constantly one color. Humphries reminds us that the sky is constantly changing and that every moment passes just as clouds pass. Looming at an intimidating 114 x 127 inches, the huge scale of the work contributes to the feeling of watching the unending sky, pondering one's existence and insignificance. Humphries is able to contain all of these feelings into just one work, proving herself to be a force to be reckoned with on the contemporary scene.



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As with Owens and Humphries, the remaining artists display a wide spectrum of today's painting scene. Not only is the show extremely well rounded, it takes on the monumental task of displaying the breadth of contemporary painting and putting each piece in conversation with each other (and does a damn good job of it). Each painter contributes a different technique, a different subject, a different view that together shows that ArtForum was wrong. Painting is not a dying medium – as always it adapts to the times to become something new and yet always familiar to the public.

[7 PAINTERS](#) is on view at Greene Naftali Gallery through August 9th.



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