

Dan Devening
Paul Erschen
Gary Stephan
Allison Wade

“Warm Front”

May 19 (Sat) - June 10 (Sun), 2018
Reception for the artists: May 19, 18:00 - 20:00



Dan Devening “Winter Frame (1)” 2018

Hagiwara Projects is pleased to announce the opening of “Warm Front” featuring Dan Devening, Paul Erschen and Allison Wade and Gary Stephan. Each of the artists have affiliations with Devening Projects, a Chicago gallery featuring contemporary projects from emerging and established. For each artist—except Gary Stephan who showed here last in 1983—this is their first exhibition in Tokyo.

Gary Stephan’s career-long engagement with what and how paintings function, is beautifully illustrated in these recent paintings in Warm Front. Carefully balancing pictorial fiction with material fact, Stephan uses his deep understanding of the subtle perceptual nuances that can shift the balance between spatial illusion and the inevitable reality of the painted object. This delicate correspondence is at the root of a body of work that continues to break new ground.

To layout the structure of each of his investigations, Stephan primes the experience of looking by fine-tuning color, shifting around and overlapping shapes, playing with focus and relying on edge to link front and back. As Stephan said recently, “With simple changes in size and location I have enjoyed revisiting mechanical perspective and in burying forms under layers of paint I changed the pictorial fiction of atmospheric perspective into a fact. One of the pleasures of working on these three paintings was the sense that they were small in size but big in scale.”

To produce the work for Warm Front, **Allison Wade** created pieces out of lightweight components that could be easily taken apart and re-assembled on site. She began with the deconstruction of a single large, wall-based, collaged fabric painting; the pieces that resulted from that disassembly are now the seedlings for these distinctive sculptures.

The painted surfaces of the new work represent a recent shift for the artist. In the past, she typically made straightforward mixed media sculpture out of heavy and fragile components (ceramics, steel, wood) without attempting to conceal the primary materials. In this new work, she explores more complex ways of treating surface; these pieces are much more gestural and painterly.

Her palette references both found and made elements. The underlying hand-dyed green and blue denims are a nod to spring (a distant hope while making the bulk of this work in the dead of Chicago winter); the pigments are a combination of hardware store miss-tints and leftovers from a studio colleague.

Although there are new moves in this work, one can still easily locate her most deep-rooted, motivating concerns—a voracious appetite for material exploration, a desire to work with materials in a non-hierarchical manner, an interest in walking the line between 2D and 3D, and a deep appreciation for playing with color and form—the work is shifting. In that way, it relates to the idea of a “warm front,” or a change/transition from one state to another.

Dan Devening is a Chicago-based painter, curator, educator and gallerist. Warm Front features a series of his most recent collages, that in this case, are arranged within a special wallpaper element that frames the individual works within a highly contrasting and optically charged field. This yellow vinyl pattern disrupts the neutrality of wall and quickly destabilizes the room. Creating tension and heightening the pressure created when gesture, plane and edge collide, Devening’s installation is a kind of theatrical stage set; the collages are the dramatic actors on that stage. Performing within their own framed and reframed tableaux, each collage features a distinctly animated character self-consciously performing for our pleasure.

For Devening, the individual works on paper are manifestations of an active and intuitive relationship to material and assembly. Water-based pigments, found and constructed papers and stitched thread, these small drawings operate as forceful arrangements of form and space, energized by the collision of disparate parts. Like the charge activated between the collages and the wall, these pieces arrive at state of equilibrium between stillness and turmoil. Those forces are compressed within these small frames and seek to represent much of how our cultural operates these days.

For **Paul Erschen**, Warm Front is an opportunity to show a series of new canvas-mounted serigraphs on paper. This somewhat obsessive method of presentation invites close examination of the work, an experience more closely aligned with how one experiences painting rather than a print. While mounting the prints to the canvas panels, he makes drastic cropping decisions after all printing is complete—a process that encourages improvisation and imbues the work with a sense of alienation. Several of the works also features layers of brushed paint and ink, used to soften and blur the graphic harshness of the printed layers.

The prints begin with fairly rigid, grid-based ink drawings that tend to degrade and become more suggestive, through stages of overprinting and color layering. The grids are linked to aspects of the post-industrial landscape, such as factory floor plans, harsh linear perspective vignettes, signage graphics, and architectural facades. Other prints feature networks of shapes, similar to those used in the painted wood and cast-object floor sculptures. In these pieces, found objects and paddle-like forms bring up a variety of associations, from rudimentary mechanical contraptions, to BDSM gear, puppetry, and medical restraint devices.

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