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## David Ostrowski

TURIN,  
at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

by Federico Florian

Left to right, David Ostrowski's *F (Dann lieber nein)*, 2013, *F (Ideal Women)*, 2013, and *F (How to do things left)*, 2014; at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.



German artist David Ostrowski paints quickly and instinctually. His favorite mediums are roughly applied spray paint and fast-drying lacquer, which confer a refreshing immediacy to the works. Mistakes are inevitable with this methodology, but Ostrowski elevates trial and error to the rank of aesthetic principle. This is definitively clear in Ostrowski's "F" paintings, a series of minimal, nonfigurative works begun in 2011. The "F" in the title stands for *Fehlermalerei*, German for "failure painting." Ostrowski's solo exhibition at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo—his first in an Italian institution—gathers together eight "F" paintings from 2013 or '14, in which he uses pieces of cotton, paper, dust and dirt in addition to paint.

Installed between the foyer and a corridor leading to the gallery's main space are *F (Auch die schönste Frau ist an den Füßen zu Ende, Heidi's Feet)* and *F (Musik ist Scheiße)*. Placed back to back and suspended from the ceiling, they jut out into the foyer in such a way that they are partially obscured by the corridor's walls. Featuring errant marks, visible corrections and sloppy smears of color, the two are the largest paintings in the exhibition, at 12½ by 11½ feet each. *Heidi's Feet* (the rest of the subtitle means "even the most beautiful woman ends at her feet") consists of a soiled white canvas bearing footprints (the artist has admitted to a foot fetish in interviews), while the other (with the subtitle "music is shit" in German) is almost entirely black, with just a small teardrop of white paint in the upper left. The unusual installation is intentional: Ostrowski's aesthetics of error have permeated even his display strategy, compromising the viewer's ability to see the works in their entirety.

Ostrowski does not take an avant-garde approach to painting. The "wrongness" of his work, rather than serving as a polemical vehicle to

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question pictorial tradition, instead reaches for an unexpected beauty. That becomes evident in the exhibition's main room. *F (Between two ferns)* and *F (A thing is a thing in a whole which it's not)* feature colorful lines of lacquer framing empty white surfaces of acrylic. Nearby, Ostrowski has arranged three works in a sort of triptych. *F (Dann lieber nein)*, in which scrawls of gray spray-paint embellish two pieces of cotton glued to the canvas's beige surface, hangs next to *F (How to do things left)*, which is black except for a blue line in the lower left. Suspended from the ceiling in front of them is *F (Ideal Women)*, a smaller white canvas with two vertical lines of orange spray-paint. The three together have a balanced sense of color and a repetition of forms that highlight a flawed delicacy and almost classical composition. Here, the calculated orchestration of the paintings, with their errors and imperfections, creates a quiet, peaceful environment, enticing the viewer toward prolonged contemplation.