



DAVID OSTROWSKI

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BY PETER J. AMDAM

The tale of David Ostrowski should by now be well known. The Cologne-born artist studied painting with Albert Oehlen at the Kunstakademie Düsseldorf from 2004 to 2009 (informed rumors have it the young Ostrowski was Oehlen's favorite student) and shortly thereafter exploded onto the international art scene—and market—with his sloppy and nonchalant, yet luminous and alluring “abstract” paintings. Phosphorous and gravity-defying white surfaces levitate up into spheres of Romantic beauty whilst carrying with them both the debris of the studio, its ubiquitous dirt and dust, and as mythomaniac stories (often installed by the artist himself, through his titles and artists books) from a lascivious mind that obsesses over women's feet. An understated and mutilated erotic topology hinges itself to Ostrowski's paintings. The credulous markings made with affordable, almost prosaic, means such as his signature cobalt blue spray paint and sutured sheets, canvases and edges: all of these, in their liminal blurredness, serve as a mark and sheer inscription of corporeality, history, ideology and a certain sentimentality.

A quick sifting through the recent writings on Ostrowski finds that very few have resisted the temptation to reproduce the Seinfeld dialogue that the artist (re-)presented in the press release for his 2013 Berlin show, *I'm OK. Moments later he was shot.* : “Jerry: They say, “What's your show about?” I say, “Nothing.” George: There you go. Jerry: I think you may have something here.” Usually taken to be a painterly program of sorts, what is generally considered a straightforward and laidback statement of Ostrowski's putative humorous and stake-less formalism should perhaps be read alongside the artist's own admis-

David Ostrowski (German, 1981) lives and works in Cologne. He is represented by Peres Projects, Berlin; Simon Lee Gallery, London/Hong Kong; and Almine Rech Gallery, Paris/Brussels.

Ostrowski's solo exhibition “Just Do It” is currently on view at the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, through 24 February, 2015. His work is also featured in the group show “Beware Wet Paint” at the ICA, London, through 16 November.

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“Das Goldene Scheiss.” Installation view at Almine Rech Gallery, Paris. Photo: Rebecca Fannelle. Courtesy of the artist and Almine Rech Gallery, Paris.

sions. He is emphatically and earnestly concerned with both beauty and language, and he wants the very materiality of his images to escape the gravity of present day information overload. This places the artist's works within a tradition of German Romanticism and its deeply ambiguous relationship to both the fragment and its status as the mark of the poetic condition par excellence, as well as irony as *the* master trope. If Seinfeld can be thought of as epitomizing *fin de siècle* pop culture's sugar coated irony then Ostrowski's ongoing “F” and “Outline” painting series aligns both align themselves with bizarre incarnations of the contemporary fragment and a violent distension of information, whether pictorial or algorithmic. The easy, pliant, pleasant, left-handed, assuming, anthropomorphic signs and indexical marks are also dismemberments and disfigurements. As if the baseboard framings of his paintings and the more or less marked operations of framing within the matrixes of the canvases and fabrics obscure determinations of the work's significant, or non-significant, status or import.

Perhaps an example from the world of record collecting could stand in as an allegory of Ostrowski's slippery and elusive difficulty: a super obscure Florida hardcore punk band simply named F put out an EP in 1983. Today, just googling the record poses serious challenges: how on earth do you google “F”? The title of the record is “You are an EP,” which only further adds to its indexical collapse. F made its own web recognition impossible *avant la lettre*, so to speak by naming itself via an extreme reduction of syntax. What remains is an F lying on the side. Like a certain series of coveted paintings. It says nothing more than the fact that is written. Or painted. ☺

“WHITE SURFACES CARRYING THE DEBRIS OF THE STUDIO AND MYTHOMANIC STORIES”

HIGHLIGHTS