

## Adam Henry

*The Sun Never Heard of a Day*

25 May - 14 July 2018

For his third solo exhibition at the gallery, under the title *The Sun Never Heard of a Day*, Adam Henry presents three quite distinct bodies of work, establishing very apparent links between them.

In the right-hand room, three large white paintings are counterbalanced by a small canvas in shades of grey and muted colours. The three paintings are variations with the same idea as the starting point. Painted according to a similar structure, they use the addition of a fine layer of highly diluted white to achieve ultimately a dense, immaculate white. Starting from colourless and culminating in a whiteness that is synonymous with neutrality. The modifications mainly occur around the edges of the canvases: the four colours used by the artist in his painting system extend in their verticality to the limits of the surface or are quite simply absent in one of the three paintings. This kind of work is reminiscent of the musical sphere, with a harmonic atmosphere with an initial rhythm repeated as a leitmotiv. One might even see a repetition of scales to reach the correct sound or an affirmation of the equal importance between a note and silence.

The fact of being able to 'read' the paintings from left to right or vice versa leads to a dynamic perception of addition or subtraction. As if we were present at the birth of the painted surface or at its total dissolution. The little grey canvas – consisting of four colours used systematically by the artist – counterbalances the hanging, and appears in all its technical complexity which makes his work so special.

Adam Henry's penchant for the serial aspect, for repetition, is clear in the left-hand room. But it is repetition with differences. As continuity is made of discontinuities, Henry combines small canvases in bright vermilion to make paintings/objects that form a very coherent whole while leaving each work its own autonomy. By acting in this way, he establishes a new correspondence of form, disconcerting or enlivening the view with these canvases placed perpendicularly, one overlapping the other or duplicating the other or masking the other. The overlapping can be seen, in a way, as a dual statement.

This series, on the one hand, does not deny the minimalist heritage through its sequential aspect, and on the other, is also a nod to the trend of *Hard-edge painting* of the late 1950s in the USA, and particularly the *Reliefs* by Ellsworth Kelly. The separation of the canvases, their nesting, offsetting and transitions remind us that painting can become sculpture and play with shadows like a bas-relief. Here we are looking at a non-traditional formal structure- although it has already been explored - which is part of the artist's overall reflection about colour, shadow, the arrangement of two shapes to create a third that is independent of the other two.

In the rear room, visitors will discover large formats emphasising the relativity of colour. Subtle variations of colour and gradation assume their full importance here. The invasion of the senses is total; on the one hand obviously from a visual viewpoint and in the other from the physical/bodily viewpoint. Each canvas has dimensions on a human scale; the body can project itself onto it and be reflected as if in a black mirror, through the shiny, polished appearance of the painting. In two works, Henry divides the space in the painting into other paintings, which provides an obvious dynamism to the rhythm of the works.

The other remarkable point is to see a radiant light emanating from the greyness (as is said about the works of the Flemish painters of the Renaissance). How can luminous paintings be made with so much grey? Once again, Adam Henry's unique technique enables him to create a new space: visual, meditative as well as cerebral.

Of course, once the exhibition is finished, the artist returns to his studio with the same questions that arise relentlessly, like the poet, who 'in a continual movement finds himself taken back to the endless night of his origins, to the source of his inspiration'.<sup>1</sup> Ultimately, Adam Henry stalks the light. By observing all his work, one could almost refer to it as an epiphany. Epiphany of light. Epiphany of painting.

Born in Pueblo (USA) in 1974. In 2017 Henry had solo exhibitions with Stefan Lundgren Gallery, Palma de Mallorca (Spain) and with ParisLondonHongKong Gallery in Chicago (USA) and took part in exhibitions at Steve Turner; Los Angeles (USA), at SALTS, Basel (Switzerland) and in Le109 in Nice (France). His work was also shown at Marianne Boesky and Joe Sheftel, both in New York, in Twistcooparcadia, Nashville, the Lost Coast Culture Machine, Fort Bragg (USA), the Biennial of Lisbon (Portugal), at Rita Urso Gallery, Milan (Italy), the Median Museum in Beijing and the Ke Center for Contemporary Art in Shanghai (China).

<sup>1</sup> Jean Starobinski, *La Beauté du monde*, Gallimard, 2016.