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Brian Calvin's "Hours" of Painterly Pauses at Almine Rech Gallery

BY NICHOLAS FORREST | MARCH 17, 2016



Brian Calvin's "Hours"

"Hours" at Almine Rech Gallery in Paris is an exhibition of new works by the LA-based landscape and portrait painter Brian Calvin who has developed a reputation as a painter of "pausing-as-an-activity." He began developing his signature figurative, non-narrative, pictorial style in the 1990s – a style that combines figuration and abstraction.

"I prefer to experience abstraction through the creation and tending of images. Painting provides the medium," Calvin has said. "The very act of painting combined with the act of looking creates a portal through which a lot can transpire. So I paint each day, trying to remain open enough to let that connection happen."

Calvin's portraits are characterized by their flat forms, close cropping, composed structures, and vibrant colours. All these qualities coalesce to create works with a surreal temporality that imbues his subjects with presence, character, and soul. The economy and restraint of his visual language emphasizes the humanness of his subjects, animating their characters and personalities.



According to gallerist Almine Rech, Calvin is an artist who has his pictorial gestures and composition under control, like in geometric abstraction. “This kind of pictorial contradiction is significant and important in the context of the global contemporary art scene as it is unusual and doesn’t allow one to easily classify his work, being abstract and figurative at the same time, which is his signature style.

Rech says that contain both expressionist aspects and flat geometric aspects – vibrancy in color and in emotion, and at the same time rigorous gesture and composition. She says that in Calvin’s work you can see elements that would not usually be conceived as being compatible in a painting: elements of German expressionism, pop art, concrete abstraction...

“A relation can be seen with Katz’s portraits and his research of flatness of form, but Brian Calvin always pours in a dose of recognizable strangeness and of psychology in the “persons” or landscape he paints,” says Rech. The fact that his paintings contain many “contradictions” in feeling, meaning, and form also makes him stand out from the crowd.”