

Calle Segelberg

UNTITLED, San Francisco

January 13, 14, 15, 2017

SCHLOSS will attend UNTITLED, San Francisco with a solo presentation by Oslo-based artist Calle Segelberg (b. 1990).

It is not without the impulse of a lofty spirit that some are moved to enter the profession of painting, attractive to them through natural enthusiasm. We watch them shuffle ideologies and thinly veiled personal desires through the application of paint on a surface. A painting offers a potion of the right now and the past; dissimilar but legible. If you're lucky, you'll witness the creakings of a humane—although often sentimental—apparatus. It may be as archetypal as early Renaissance painting: from one decade to the next, the representation of the human being changed radically. All of a sudden, it's been granted grace by virtue of being a person. It was given volume, expression, and agency. Or it may be recent, like Pop painting. Suddenly the temporal and aesthetic policies of a portrait had to share rules with tatty paparazzi shots. As audience members we routinely fail to neglect how the human being is represented.

Calle Segelberg paints the silent, flattened shapes of silhouettes, unnervingly smaller than his own, and barely more astute than many others. His shapes are robbed of designation. They are a general body, seeking companionship with one another in gestures, as though they're reaching out for one another. Corny! But what else is there to do? While they may seem mute at first glance, they burst with form. Painter's paranoia: a heady impurity of schools. Agape with German heaviness, proto-expressionist, pawky outlines and obtrusive, looming figures. Moronic bows to pre-revolution French court portraiture, no human expression at all. Everything by proxy. There are unabashed references to pictograms. Whatever image tells you when you may indeed move and when you shouldn't, which door to enter to be in privacy. We can even find Velázquez in Segelberg's highlighting, his unclear displays of power and benignity.

Segelberg's own body is at average height for a Scandinavian male in his twenties: native to visual forms of emoting, and unfamiliar with hard labor. Pale. A cellar dweller according to the Russian, somewhat French, literary canon. A self-criticizing body, priding itself in its cultural finesse, its scholarly and practiced (yet unaccustomed) approach to contemporary culture.

One can easily find motivations for assuming this position. It's not controversial to acknowledge the fact that marginalia no longer signal an aggressively forward-minded aesthetic practice—the avant garde—but rather the scrupulous consideration of the unpleasant, odourous context of history. In Segelberg's paintings, we find reason to ponder the mechanics of an action or activity understood and repeated, bettered and regurgitated, emptied and revived. These paintings drag their history like a long, scornful tail. But they in turn scold their tail back for its ineptitude, its failure to tell the truth, its malleability, its whimsiness in preference and politics. And they enact this critique through a strange double-motion of affirmation and negation. That is: both saying «I know» and «No».

- Nora Joung

Calle Segelberg (Born 1990 in Stockholm) lives and works in Oslo.

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