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‘Pictography’ at Sperone Westwater, New York

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'Pictography' at Sperone Westwater. Installation View
(Courtesy: Sperone Westwater)

Sperone Westwater is hosting a group exhibition, titled 'Pictography' at the gallery's New York venue.

The exhibition features a selection of paintings by artists - David Armacost, Katherine Bradford, EJ Hauser, Yevgeniya Baras, John Finneran, Guillermo Kuitca, Michael Berryhill, Heather Guertin, and Ryan McLaughlin. Presented as ideograms, these paintings convey a mood rather than a hypothesis, exploring aspects of a pictographic turn in painting. Some of these works on view seem to acknowledge the pervasiveness of digital screens; while others appear overtly archaic or totemic in cast, seemingly emphasizing their non-digital nature, whether in facture or in esoteric subject matter. Throughout, the works behave as text or read as thought-pictures, like cartoons of ideas.

Subjecting motifs to distillation and transformation, the participating artists suggest that long-discarded Modernist notions about painting as text or sign might still have their own significance in artistic expressions. Jostling the texts against image and motifs which appear to be drawn from nature, sketches from artist EJ Hauser's "drawing labs" sessions appear to depict poignant phrases rather than actual landscapes, preserving the immediate graphic qualities in these paintings; while in the work of Ryan McLaughlin, the imbued iconic elements recall Marsden Hartley's military paintings of heraldic signs. Yevgeniya Baras' richly textured paintings embody scrolling Russian script, popping up and squeezing between the work's main compositional elements; while Heather Guertin's works derive their emotional charge from their misapprehension as portraiture. In John Finneran's work, the body similarly splits into its signifying features of eyes, limbs, or hieratic figures elongated across the picture plane, mining the narrow gap between iconic and three-dimensional space. Guillermo Kuitca and David Armacost each employ architectural motifs to stand in for a wide array of concerns. Michael Berryhill's work on view characterizes both as Matissean pattern and runic symbol, where his signature figure and foreground invert and revert without clear resolution; and Katherine Bradford's recent painting registers as archaic shorthand for a mythological episode, as if cave paintings depicted case studies in contemporary psychology.

The exhibition is on view through August 4, 2017 at Sperone Westwater, 257 Bowery, New York, NY 10002, USA.

For details, visit: www.blouinartinfo.com/galleryguide/sperone-westwater/overview