

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Dan Rees
'ENORMOUS CHANGES AT THE LAST MINUTE'

12 April – 18 May 2024
Preview: Thursday 11 April, 6–8pm
4654 W Washington Blvd, Los Angeles

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to present 'Enormous Changes at the Last Minute', a solo exhibition by Berlin-based artist Dan Rees. The artist's new body of works build upon his experiments with marbling, an image-making technique that for the artist lies somewhere between painting, printmaking and photography. The process, Rees states, "reminds me of developing from negatives, preparing the inks on the surface of water, dipping the different canvases into the water, hosing them down, hanging them up to dry and waiting for the result to emerge." And just like darkroom photography, Rees's portrait-sized abstractions bear an intimacy that resists nonfigurative painting's impulse to go bigger and bigger. On the contrary, Rees's modest portraits require great attention to tiny details as he repeats the ink application process over many weeks until he finds the right balance of forms.

Balance, in the sense above, however, is not limited to the forms contained within an individual piece. "It is often the case that in the making of a new work all the previous works will be rendered incomplete by comparison and will be subjected to further re-working," Rees explains. The artist, in other words, aims to join each individual artwork into what he describes as "a collective conceptual unity." Rather than simply bearing a thematic through line – as in most curated exhibitions – each piece in the exhibition owes its final composition to decisions made about other works in the show. Inherent to 'Enormous Changes at the Last Minute', then, are two polarised investments: In one direction, Rees leans into the visual pleasure of his playful formal studies; in the other, he prioritises the whole of the exhibition over its particulars in a manner that calls to mind the anti-formalist commitments of process art.

Process art, a movement that emphasises the activity of making itself over an intended outcome, resists the appreciation of art as discrete objects for the sake of contemplating the macroscopic conditions behind their creation, such as technique, materiality, and physical forces like gravity. In other words, process art pushes back at a sort of uncomplicated and naïve view of art, namely that such objects' *raison d'être* should be taken for granted. In resistance, process art champions randomness and nontraditional materials over deliberateness and custom, and Rees's fascination with marbling certainly teeters on the threshold of such interests. But unlike process art, the artist has constrained his compositions to traditional rectangular substrates, and so one might wonder if the polarity of formal pleasure and processual rigour is an attempt at levelling both.

In the exhibition, the artist has divided the works under two series titles: 'The Gesture with Which Narratives Once Began' and 'Aesthetic Hedonism and the Happiness of Knowledge'. Both titles are subtle references to Theodor Adorno, the prominent German social theorist, whose philosophical dynasty, the Frankfurt School, fiercely debated the politics and social importance of art under capitalism. The allusion to this philosopher underscores the overarching epistemic anxieties that hover over Rees's deceptively playful portraits. By dwelling on the inherent dialectical tension between conceptualism and aestheticism, 'Enormous Changes at the Last Minute' calls upon the viewer to ask whether both lineages are now in crisis.

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Dan Rees (born in 1982 in Swansea, Wales) lives and works in Berlin. Rees studied at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste – Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main until 2009 and graduated from Camberwell College of Arts, London in 2004. Entangled with pop culture and art historical references, Rees's multifaceted practice is in constant dialogue with the context around him, rendering dynamic and conceptually oriented works. Drawing from his childhood memories in Swansea, but also engaging concepts from abstraction and modernity, he has a process-driven approach that engenders innovative forms of art-making.

His most recent solo exhibition 'Aleatory Compensatory' opened at Tanya Leighton, Berlin in March 2023. Other recent exhibitions of Rees's work include 'The Beauty of Early Life' at ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe and 'OMNIBUS' at Kinderhook & Caracas, Berlin both in 2022; 'World Art Trends 1982' at Nuno Centeno, Porto in 2021; 'Attachment' at T293, Rome in 2018, and 'Road Back To Relevance', Nomas Foundation, Rome in 2016.

Rees's work is in major public collections including Tang Museum, Skidmore College, New York; National Museum, Wales; and the Henry Art Gallery Collection, Seattle.

For more information, please contact info@tanyaleighton.com.

The gallery is open Wednesday to Saturday, 11–5pm and by appointment.