

MIGUEL ABREU GALLERY

BLAKE RAYNE

Blake Rayne's work emerges at the confluence of a decidedly materialist approach to painting – Robert Ryman, "Supports/Surfaces" – and a linguistic turn in which certain terms or words become pictorial operators.

Rayne's basic orientation is to question the terms 'painter' and 'painting' and to treat them as signs—that is, as fictions. They have no stable material definition, but rather are shaped by semiotic, institutional, and physical relations. Rayne's mode of abstract painting is irrevocably marked by conceptual art. Here, context is constitutive.

A cryptic accumulation of references culled from esoteric historical figures, archival images, literature, personal relationships, and network television are, in Rayne's body of work, united under the structuring sign of cinema. Each exhibition is staged like a sequence in a film, necessarily informed by and in dialogue with those that came before it. 'Scripts' drawn from film production that call for folding, spraying, stitching, and looping govern the work's material formation. The patterns that appear on its surface always have a relationship to the structure of the pictorial support.

For *The Disappearance of Red Pistachio Shells / The Dawn of the Californian Nut Industry* (1979) (2007), a loop of canvas was acted upon with protective films, rollers, and spray paint, then cut and stitched into individual works. In *Dust of Suns* (2008), Rayne deployed the cut alongside the fold, this time hanging canvases alongside their corresponding crates in what amounted to a spatial 'trailer' for a future film. This dialectic between the word and the painterly gesture was again taken up in *Folder and Application* (2010), which overlaid white monochrome canvases with projected text and a cascading felt letter 'a'; the exhibition staged a job 'application' for the position of painter. In *On Fridays We Have Half Days* (2014) recast aspects of the movie theater apparatus—box office, concession stand, projection booth—within the space of the gallery: paintings functioned as 'posters' and promotional tools and a stop-motion digital 'trailer' projected them in miniature on live bacterial culture. In 2018, Rayne initiated a series of four exhibitions beginning with *DOGSKULLDOGS* at Miguel Abreu Gallery, centered around painted appropriations of famous Neanderthal skull remnants, engaging while simultaneously suspending the material realities of archeological, cultural and political history, linguistic reference, and the expressivity of painting within an individual art object.

Blake Rayne continually engages the history of painting as a field of tensions that compose the practice of painting as cultural sign. He attempts to work through the need for historical competence in understanding the possible relevance of painting for both the painter's level of self-consciousness *and* for forces of legitimation within a corporate culture of information. The sign 'painting' is on the one hand always compensatory for other cultural interests, at the same time that it also suggests a field of evasions and deflections, a material practice in which the artist is constantly displaced by language while being administered by institutional demands for certain types of artistic subjects: whether the latter be the hack *enfant-terrible* or the artist intent on legitimizing his/her endeavors with a trove of cultural reference.

Blake Rayne (b. 1969, Lewes, Delaware) lives and works in New York. He attended the California Institute of the Arts, received a fellowship from the American Academy in Berlin (2010), and has taught at Columbia University's School of Visual Arts (2003-09).

In 2016-17, Cabin of the Accused, the first survey exhibition of Rayne's work, was held at the Blaffer Art Museum in Houston, Texas. Recent solo exhibitions include Reserves, Miguel Abreu Gallery (2025); Archives I: Blake Rayne, Emanuela Campoli, Paris (2024); Bad Maps, Galeria Nuno Centeno, Porto (2023); Blake Rayne, 1301PE, Los Angeles (2022). His work was included in L'Atelier du Sud, Fondation Vincent van Gogh, Arles (2023-24); Collected by Thea Westreich and Ethan Wagner, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016); Chat Jet: Painting <Beyond> the Medium, Künstlerhaus, Graz (2013); Nikolas Gambaroff, Michael Krebber, R. H. Quaytman, Blake Rayne, Bergen Kunsthall, Norway (2010), and in numerous other group exhibitions, including at The Kitchen, SculptureCenter, Artists Space, Gladstone Gallery, Reena Spaulings, Greene Naftali, and American Fine Arts, all in New York, and at Gagosian Gallery, Paris.

Rayne's work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; FRAC – Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain Poitou-Charentes, France; Pinault Collection; the Portland Museum of Art; and the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, among others.

Tense and Spaced Out: Polar Nights, Glacial Chaos, and the Ecology of Misery, a monograph on Rayne's work, with texts by John Kelsey, David Lewis, Jaleh Mansoor, Laura Owens, Sean Paul, and Javier Sánchez Martínez, was published in 2017 by Sequence Press/Blaffer Art Museum/Sternberg Press.