

MAKE ROOM

Things Seen

02.04.2023 - 03.18.2023

Curated by Patrick Zapien

David Abbott, Taylor Ervin, Will Gabaldón, Rema Ghuloum, Errol Sawyer, Peter Shear, Yoab Vera

Partway through the final section of György Lukács' essay on "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat," in the course of a discussion on how the antinomies of modern life (the separation of subject and object, freedom and necessity, individual and society, form and content) are reified as "facts" and taken for granted, the Hungarian Marxist makes a somewhat oblique reference to Ernst Bloch and his theory of landscape, which notes that "landscape only starts to become landscape at a definite (though of course variable) distance from the observer and that only as an observer set apart in space can [the artist] relate to nature in terms of landscape at all." Bloch wanted to dispel the false immediacy of a seemingly natural concept such as 'landscape' by showing how, rather than being given, it originates in the already mediated process of vision (i.e., confronting nature "as an observer set apart in space"). For Lukács, the importance of this illustration lay in the recognition that despite their opposition—or rather, because of it—subject and object are intertwined and interconnected, and that articulating the distance between them (through an image like landscape) is also a way of measuring their correspondence and closeness. Subject and object are moments of the same reality set apart in space. Each is present in-and-for the other: the subject for the object, the object for the subject. Their confrontation represents existence as such: consciousness and the unconscious, shadow and light.

The artworks that make up *Things Seen*—paintings and photographs by David Abbott, Taylor Ervin, Will Gabaldón, Rema Ghuloum, Errol Sawyer, Peter Shear, and Yoab Vera—turn the simple act of looking into an allegory for the making of art and the living of life. What unites this group of artists is a desire to avoid constructing images and instead to remain open to their unexpected arrival. The two photographers in the show—**Taylor Ervin** and **Errol Sawyer**—exemplify this approach by treating the city as a vast reflection pool in which the play of light and movement re-orders the world and creates it anew. Sensitive to the way that memories produce feelings and feelings induce memory, **David Abbott** returns to the same viewpoints over and over, attempting to capture how the landscape changes with the stream of his thoughts. **Yoab Vera's** paintings betray a similar obsession with the relationship between certain images and particular moments in time. Each seascape is an offering for a day that has passed: a sign that its sun had shone and continues to shine. For **Will Gabaldón**, repetition takes on a serial quality. His sparse, square canvases seem to catalog the infinite variability of the same basic scene: an empty field bordered by dense foliage in which one or two trees form a mass that blocks the horizon and flattens the image. This playful self-negation (both creating and denying the illusion of depth) also motivates the abstractions of **Peter Shear**, which seem less about composing a picture than making the type of painting in which the image merges completely with the haptic delicacy of a surface covered with brushstrokes. The austerness of this approach heightens the artist's awareness of each choice so that the work grows in significance with every consecutive mark. **Rema Ghuloum** uses the push-pull dynamic of foreground and background to form paintings layer by layer until they attain a kind of resonant vibration in which pure light breaks into its component rays, the canvas fluttering like a technicolor veil in the sun.

Things Seen is a show about looking and looking at looking.