

Rhodes, David

"Shaped Canvases and Broken Rules: Shapeshifters at Luhring Augustine"

Artcritical

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LUHRING  
AUGUSTINE

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## Shaped Canvases and Broken Rules: Shapeshifters at Luhring Augustine

by David Rhodes



Installation view of "Shapeshifters," 2016, at Luhring Augustine. Courtesy of the gallery.

Though there all along, the issue of using a shaped support came into particular focus during the 1960s as an emphasis on both the painting as object, its unnecessary privileging of easel painting and ultimately the expendability of using only a single rectangle. In "Shapeshifters," now at Luhring Augustine, 19 artists are brought together who explore the possibilities of a shaped support as an optional formal development. But gone today are the conscious strictures and aesthetic divisions articulated in 1967 by Michael Fried in his germinal essay "Art and Objecthood," though some of the exhibition's earliest works are from that moment. There are works here that evince playfulness or Dada disregard for convention, such as Martin Kippenberger, for example, as well as a compositional exuberance of both materials and pictorial forms that ultimately set an overall shape. That is to say they find shape by an excessive build up of material

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itself, as in Jeremy DePerez’s *Untitled (Unknown)* (2016), or in working with one form or another, such as Imi Knobel’s *Kartoffelbild 15* (2012) leaving those shapes to define an external perimeter edge.



Imi Knobel, *Kartoffelbild 15*, 2012. Acrylic on aluminum, 69 11/16 x 98 13/16 x 4 5/16 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine.

Among the large-scale works in the main gallery, David Novros’s extraordinary *4:30* (1966/2000) is a multipanel painting that extends horizontally in four joined parts, two panels running horizontal and two at an angle. The parts are stepped alternately, allowing the wall to form inducted negative shapes to the positive shapes of the panels themselves. The pale tone of the white pearlescent paint changes color to a pink as the viewer moves and the light hits its surface differently. The modular panels identify the piece as an object within an architectural context — it’s as far away from the notion of painting as a window onto

fictional space as can be imaged. This is now nothing to do with a perspectival view set in a rectangular portal; it is an encounter with organized physical elements in real space. Above the doorway to the other galleries is Blinky Palermo’s *Untitled* (1966) a nine-by-eighteen-inch black triangle of muslin over wood. This small work punctuates the architecture like a subtle votive object, altering the straightforward experience of passing through a doorway into a consideration of passing through a particular architectural space.



Steven Parrino, *Touch and Go*, 1989–95. Enamel on canvas, 96 1/16 x 72 inches.

Several paintings in this exhibition very successfully use actual gaps within the format of the painting itself: Kippenberger’s *N.G.D. hellblau* (1987), Richard Tuttle’s *Red Brown Canvas* (1967), and Steven Parrino’s *Touch and Go* (1989–95) all expose the wall behind within the painting to simple, and inventive effect. Parrino’s work shows painterliness in the form of stains and drips visible along the edges and in two cut-out segments. Ruth Root combines, in *Untitled* (2015), fabric, Plexiglas, enamel and spray paint in a piece that fits various planes at diagonals to each other that only in the top left corner conform to a rectangle. Elsewhere they simply amass frontally as if slotted and layered together. The feel is collage, the format a construction from disparate parts.

Although stacked vertically, like Root’s painting, *3 Part*

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*Variation #5* (2011–13) by Joanna Pousette-Dart departs methodologically. Three conjoined rounded forms contain curvilinear shapes; the relationship between them is seamless, as they appear to generate one another. The color relationships are also compelling; again, moving visually backward and forward, the colors seem to call each other into being.

There is no doubt that the artist list for this exhibition could be longer, I’m thinking for example of Joe Overstreet, Alan Shields and Al Loving, to name just three. There is much very good work to be seen already here and the point is well made that a standard rectangle is not only unnecessary, but alternatives await further exploration in any number of directions and for many reasons — one being that there is no good reason not to.



David Novros, 4:30, 1966. Acrylic on canvas, 72 x 192 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine.