

Artsy: «Up and Coming: Poetry Meets Rock ‘N’ Roll in Chris Succo’s Abstract Works», by Molly Gottschalk, September 12, 2014.

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ARTSY EDITORIAL
SEP 12TH, 2014 3:14 PM

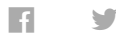


Photo by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.

Though exceptionally long waitlists make Chris Succo’s paintings all but unobtainable, on a Monday morning, staring candidly through FaceTime, the 34-year-old artist is surprisingly approachable. With messy blonde hair tucked beneath a baseball cap, coolly smoking a cigarette, Succo chats from the couch of his Düsseldorf studio, surrounded by not-so-subtle clues of a process fueled by poetry and rock ‘n’ roll—scattered LPs, road cases, a copy of Hunter S. Thompson’s 1966 novel *Hell’s Angels*. And despite the rigor of preparing work for two forthcoming exhibitions—one opening this week at DUVE Berlin and the next in October, at Robert Blumenthal—Succo seems undaunted by the

demand.



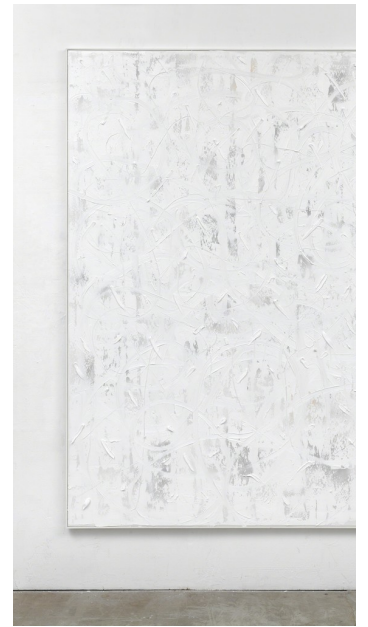
Photos by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.



Chris Succo
SHAMELESS IS A TALENT #3, 2014
DUVE Berlin

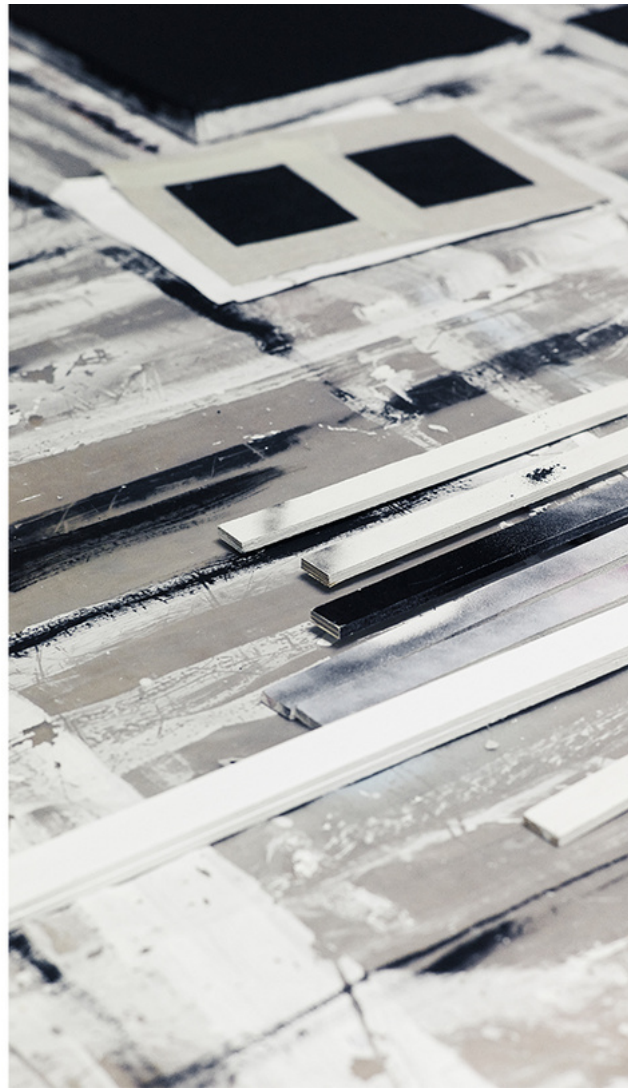


Chris Succo
YOU GOT ME ON THAT ONE, 2014
ROD BARTON
SOLD



Chris Succo
BEAUTIFUL SOUL, BEAUTIFUL BODY,
ROD BARTON

Already this year, he opened his first U.S. solo exhibition, “Beauty Knows No Pain,” at RH Contemporary Art, New York, and was featured in Adam Lindemann’s indelible Journal Gallery retrospective at Venus Over Manhattan, cherry picked among the decade’s established and rising stars. But the fall is where Succo’s real momentum begins. The show at DUVE marks a new direction for Succo; the last debut of this magnitude, he recalls, was his first all-painting show in Geneva in 2013, where he unveiled the collector-coveted “White Paintings.” Perhaps his best-known series, these works are made by spray-painting lacquer onto canvas, followed by gestural layers of white oil paint, allowing flashes of color to shine through. The new paintings take the white ones as their origin, Succo tells me as he pans the iPad across the studio, though the process is calmer and more precise. For the new series, Succo pulls an aluminum spatula across the canvas—like squeegee to silkscreen. “I always liked silkscreening, that you could create an image by just one swoosh,” he says. “It looks so simple, so elegant, so fluid. You have these little marks that just occur, and you can’t do anything about it.”



Photos by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.

The second series to be shown at DUVE, collages of punk rock posters silkscreened on canvas, feels right: Succo, whose first (and unending) love is music, played in rock bands all over Germany before enrolling in art school. “Art was always there,” he says, but it wasn’t until a friend spotted paintings in a corner of his rehearsal space and encouraged him to apply to Kunstakademie Düsseldorf—where he attended, followed by the Royal College of Art—that he considered a career as an artist. Today, music is entwined throughout his practice: the road cases he’s repurposed as sculptures; the Neil Young playlist at his studio; his titles, which often reference songs (like Frank Zappa’s “Beauty Knows No Pain”) that he collects for a book of poetry he’s been writing with a friend for the past five years. According to Robert Blumenthal, the Upper East Side dealer and collector who counts Succo as both one of his favorite artists and a close friend, the influence of poetry and music is a defining part of Succo’s identity as an artist. “It’s a strange combination,” he says. “A lot of these titles are coming from his poetry, and a lot of the poetry is coming from his influence as a child being on the road, being involved with rock ‘n’ roll. I think it’s a big part of his work and who he is; where he’s coming from and where he’s going.”



Photo by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.



Photos by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.

And the direction he's going, according to Blumenthal, is promising. "Chris is in such high demand," he says, citing major collectors and MoMA trustees who are buying his work. None of the success, though, has gone to his head. "Chris is very much a man of his word. I think it shows in his artwork as well, because he's such an accomplished person; it translates into great art." Blumenthal will show Succo's "Black Paintings" in his gallery next month, and admits to having a substantial collection of Succo's work at home. "Every time I see one of Chris's works, they're different, and I immediately want one," he said. "That's why I collect his work in depth."



Installation view of "Chris Succo" at DUVE Berlin courtesy of the gallery.



Chris Succo
Untitled, 2014
DUVE Berlin



Chris Succo
Untitled, 2014
DUVE Berlin



Chris Succo
Untitled, 2014
DUVE Berlin

My virtual tour concludes near a shelf stacked with cans of German-made spray paints, and though the colors are abundant, I know Succo's favorites are black and white; a love first incarnate in the contrast of photographs and the rich, deep, specific black of analog photographic paper. It is no surprise, then, that both of his upcoming shows, at DUVE and Robert Blumenthal, will be entirely black and white. "To enter a black and white room..."—he pauses—"I like to have black and white. It's a preference." Further on the radar, he'll have a solo show with Almine Rech in Brussels in March, the Journal Gallery in New York in

May, and London gallerist Rod Barton in fall of 2015, and between then and now a handful of unannounced shows that put a glint in his eye, impossible to miss even 3,700 miles away.



Photo by Robert Eikelpoth for Artsy.

—Molly Gottschalk