ALMINE RECH

Kadar Brock
cast with flashback cast with flashback

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Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present *cast with flashback cast with flashback*, an exhibition of new paintings by New York City-based artist Kadar Brock. Brock will display the latest works from three of his ongoing series of paintings. These bodies of works interrelate. The material produced through the scraping down of one painting generates the paint chips that produce another, the sanding down of which generates the dust that comprises yet another.

The title of the exhibition refers to a mechanic in the card-based fantasy game *Magic: The Gathering*, which Brock plays. The text "Cast with Flashback" appears when a player is able to reuse a spell that they had already used previously. By this special exception, something that should have been relegated to the past is made present and active again. This not only suggests Brock's longstanding use of game-derived spell casting systems, both analogue and digital, as processes to organize and guide his activity on the canvas. But it also resonates with Brock's references to a preexisting painting vocabulary derived from Modernism. These include: the color field, a process-based approach, a reflexivity of materials and content to the way the work was made, and to the material terms of painting itself. All of these Brock consciously derives from the toolbox of art history and replays in ways that, like these re-accessed spells, are drawn from the past, but are refigured as active agents in the present.

The doubling of the title refers to a glitch that exists only in the online version of the game, which displays the text twice when such a spell is cast. Brock likes the way that this suggests how digital space is one where things morph and multiply as they circulate through its networks, in certain cases allowing us to re-access old things in new ways. Brock demonstrates, through his work, that this includes Modernist ways of approaching the task of making a convincing picture. For, pointedly, Brock finds that the result of his manipulations are more affecting than the painting he starts with. This positions Brock astutely within a younger generation dealing with the changing status of painting as a medium. Brock, along with his peers, have seen that gesture no longer has to be figured only as empty. Instead, it has been reinvigorated by new kinds of gestures: such as swiping and tapping touchscreens. This in turn makes us newly aware of other ways of acting: including the workman-like gestures of sanding, casting, etc. that Brock uses in the studio.

In terms of the three series of paintings on view here, they all begin as conventional paintings that Brock produces with all the unselfconscious indulgences and freedoms of old, romantic ideas of direct, intuitive painting practices. These become available to him only because he knows that soon they will be erased by the activity of his sander. Out of these Brock produces his sanded paintings through a meticulous, labor-intensive process of first scraping, and then sanding down all his painted marks, achieving a subtle, worn gradient color field effect, which Brock enhances by careful additions of numerous layers of industrial strength primer and spray paint. The scraping and sanding process, even as it erases Brock's original marks, creates new ones, and retains the history of the process through the effervescent pinks and blues that remain. Other points of formal interest in these works are the holes and tears that Brock's razor makes in the canvas.

These gestures in turn produce other series' of works, those produced through the aggregation of the paint chips that fall off of the painting in the act of scraping. And another series produced by the turning of the accumulated dust of the sanding process into a monochrome slab. All this establishes a contained ecosystem of sorts in Brock's studio. Nothing goes to waste, as the byproducts of every process are creatively redistributed into new works. Other series' evolve organically as Brock finds new ways of making use of the side effects of his workman-like activities.

Brock's goal is that the resulting paintings, in the juxtaposition of a reductive quality with quiet but evident aesthetic effects, will provide the viewer with a space of respite and contemplation.

Alex Bacon