

Erik Lindman

Jun 30 — Aug 12, 2023 | Shanghai

Almine Rech Shanghai is pleased to announce Erik Lindman's eighth solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from June 30 to August 12, 2023.

All color is a texture, a play of light vibrating against the very structure of the world. This was understood over two thousand years ago when Lucretius wrote of a cloth torn apart thread by thread, its crimson dye slowly “breath[ing] out its components before the shreds revert to seeds of things.” That color is not merely superficial but is in fact a microscopic shape creating traps and mirrors for light would have been self-evident to the medieval painter grinding pigment into oil, and even more so for those early humans smudging clay and burnt bones onto cave walls. Traveling backwards in time, those differences between pigment and substrate become more and more arbitrary, and must converge in myriad moments of recognition: puddles in a riverbed recalling facial features, a stone cracked open to reveal a sparkling universe... Painting’s quiet history, the one inaccessible to the layman, is as much about how things feel as it is about how they look.

Erik Lindman is uniquely attuned to that history, having incorporated all sorts of texture into his paintings and sculptures, from found sheet metal and plywood to fabrics and glass beads. In one of our conversations, Lindman used “redemptive” to describe his forms, but was quick to guard against reading his work as an uplifting of detritus. His paintings are not about rebirth or any alchemical process that turns trash to gold; they have to do with mastery, getting up to a point with materials where they can be manipulated. These recent canvases are finished when their component parts yield to the whole, when all of their fibers begin to move in concert as a muscle.

In the large painting *Dipsas*, a spindly form floats in an even blue; but up close, its edges are more enmeshed with the blue than resting on top of it, seeming to weave and drip in and out of the top layer of pigment. In these compositions, streaks of color are actually gashes in the surface holding all sorts of structures, like pieces of inlaid fabric or accumulated rivers of pigment. Texture here is both found and accumulated, a treasure built and discovered at the same time. There are moments where archaeology seems not so much an act of recovery, but more a description of solid material becoming liquid for a moment. In *Passerina*, the fanned-out texture of embedded webbing pushes against thick pigment on one edge and diaphanous touches of color on the other. It is a rubbing of fish scale, or a bird in flight, an iridescent moment in stucco. And in *Malva*, patterned ribbons cross in neat perpendiculars, their tails deviating only slightly along a curve—in between, a carnival of mauve, cobalt, and chartreuse. That entire arrangement at first seems to operate against the surrounding red that is viscous and thick with downward movement. But the painting’s center is like an outcropping in a waterfall: sculpted by years of erosion, yet only visible in fragments. The eye follows the rock’s contour in freeze frames, form buttressed by flow.

Those congruent grains—rushing together toward an undefined center—might provide a glimpse of the redemptive. It is not that Lindman has transformed any one material; they are each inexorably their own. What washes over these pictures is a small perfection, a hand making red into a fiery cascade, yellow into an incipient bloom, blue into an ocean. It is almost an economy, the way that greens become gems and patterns become fossilized, as if color were being delivered in three dimensions into this world.

— Louis Block, writer and painter