ALMINE RECH

Mark Hagen
Black Swamp

Mar 14 — Apr 11, 2013 | Brussels

MARK HAGEN : BLACK SWAMP

March 14 – April 10, 2013

Opening Thursday, March 14 (5 to 8 PM)

Almine Rech is pleased to present Los Angeles-based artist Mark Hagen's first solo exhibition in Brussels of new paintings and sculpture. Pushing common and utilitarian materials in directions which often approach the monumental yet oppose the "monument" with its typical veneration of power, aspirations of permanence, and reliance on illusion and hierarchy, Hagen's work instead employs context, contingency, material matter of factness, and process. His work challenges historical narratives, the customs for the display and viewing of art, as well as the conventional qualitative hierarchies that accompany them.

In *Black Swamp* conceptual entanglements mirror visual ones and historical and spatial disorientations suggest alternative trajectories for well worn paths. Here Hagen's "cast" acrylic paintings on burlap, DIY metal space frames, polished volcanic glass boulders, and cement screen-like sculptures — generated through a mix of controlled and surrendered processes, which act as rational and reasonable springboards, arenas, and frameworks within which the unintended, the amorphous, and the impractical flourish — suggest a mimetic portrait of the gallery space itself as just such an arena.

Epitomizing the modular, reconfigurable, and "unoriented" in Hagen's work, and central to *Black Swamp*, are Hagen's new DIY space frame sculptures. Approaching the architectural, these pieces recall the space frame's history: championed by 1960's radical artist/architects like Yona Friedman and Constant Nieuwenhuys as a means for achieving a utopian, architectural nomadism, yet eventual consignment to neutralized, industrial utility and corporate/civic decor. Performing in the exhibition as pedestals and room dividers, as well as impractical, obstructive constructions, these sculptures suggest other possible historical trajectories all the while framing and elucidating 30 cubic meters of space of the gallery (yet breaking down small enough to go onto a single pallet).

Interacting with this space frame installation are several volcanic glass pieces. Cut from large boulders following found contours and polished to a mirror finish, these sculptures recall the deep prehistoric significance of obsidian (its anachronistic quality), along with its subsequent abandonment as a significant material for culture. Lacking a continuous sculptural tradition and associated with the utilitarian arrowhead, these pieces are made to perform as traditional sculpture on pedestals to utilitarian door stop, their iridescent faces evoking authorless, autonomous, process-derived abstractions.

Also debuting in this exhibition are Hagen's large, "cast tile" paintings. Here rearrangeable, off-the-shelf plastic tiles, plastic sheeting and packing tape are used as the textural "foundation" for what becomes an analog of the material circumstances of the painting's making. Poured through the back of burlap sheets and squeegeed to create mixed, gradients of color these paintings employ simultaneously the linear sequence, the non-repeating nature of the gradient with the repetition and cyclic quality of the pattern.

Mark Hagen was born in 1972 in Black Swamp, Virginia. Recent exhibitions include *Made in L.A. 2012 New Art Now*, the LA Biennial at the Hammer Museum; Art Basel Miami Beach, Art Public, at the Bass Museum of Art; and *Lost Line: Contemporary Art from the Collection*, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He lives and works in Los Angeles, California.