

JOHANNES VOGT

Alexander Kroll, “Imagism”

January 31 – February 28, 2019

Johannes Vogt Gallery is pleased to present the first New York solo exhibition of LA-based painter Alexander Kroll. Like the city in which he lives, Kroll’s works are joyfully unplanned: each is an accumulated plastic wisdom; built slowly, painting by painting, over time. To categorize the nature of his marks would be to miss the point entirely. These are hybrid creatures, born from a deep love of the tradition of painting rather than one particular style. Though he is engaged with the language and history of abstraction, the artist has a longtime love of figuration — he often points out, “I’m as interested in Vuillard and Bonnard as I am in de Kooning or Oehlen.”

This is sacred but unstable ground where the recognizable is always shifting, only visible out of the corner of one’s eye. A face or stray appendage emerges then quickly disappears. Walking here requires a delicate balance; fields of expanding and collapsing space collide and shift constantly. This phenomenon is a particular pleasure for Kroll. He explains, “The one thing that painting does that nothing else does is to create space where there was none. That, to me is the magic.” This obsession is one borrowed from the Italian Renaissance, a period he speaks of with an abiding knowledge and reverence.

It is easy to feel a sense of history when looking closely at his use of materials. The artist begins by selecting the physical properties of the canvas. Resisting a single format, Kroll is constantly manipulating the shape, scale and material of his supports, which he describes as “the first structural condition of a painting.” A square or rectangle, canvas, linnen, jutte rabbit skin glue, wooden boards and aluminum all present unique departure points. This is a physical, sensual process, a direct response to the feeling of the surface, the brush, the paint and the arm as muscle memory takes over.

His is an experimental lab for mad science, where linseed oil and liquified amber alter the medium. New gestures shake hands with familiar ones in a space where more is more. Skeins of paint wrestle with carefully blended gradients while calligraphic scrawls, flurried swaths of brushwork and sensuous piles of thick oil all push, pull and wrestle in chaotic harmony. Like fond, hazy memories, they form the layers of what becomes a dense archeology of painting-making.

—Text by Howard Hurst

Alexander Kroll was born in 1981 and lives and works in Los Angeles. Kroll holds an M.F.A from the Otis College of Art and Design, and a bachelor’s degree in art from Yale University. Kroll is represented by Praz Delavallade Gallery in Los Angeles and Paris; Fredric Snitzer Gallery in Miami; and James Harris Gallery in Seattle. His most recent gallery solo shows took place in 2018 at James Harris Gallery in Seattle and at Praz Delavallade Gallery in Los Angeles. He has taught at a variety of institutions including the Art Center College of Design, California College of the Arts, and the UCLA School of Art and Architecture.

Johannes Vogt Gallery is committed to bringing attention to the complex artistic and cultural ties that bind New York to Europe, the Americas, and beyond. The gallery program features a strong roster of emerging to mid-career artists and has become known for reintroducing established artists to new audiences, including Garth Evans, Mernet Larsen, and Abby Leigh, among others. Founded in 2011, Johannes Vogt first opened at 526 West 26th Street in New York City’s Chelsea neighborhood, where it resided before relocating to 55 Chrystie Street in the Lower East Side. In September 2018, the gallery relocated to the Upper East Side at 958 Madison Avenue.