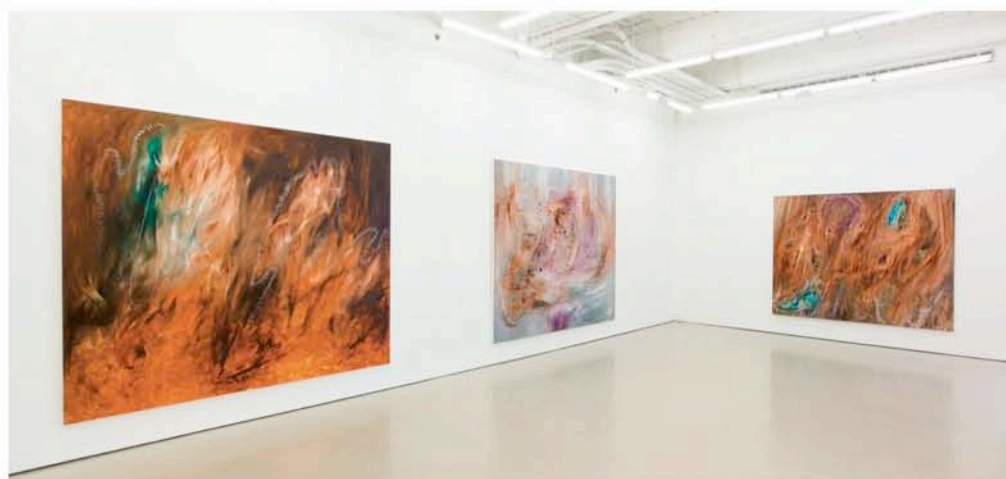


Art in America INTERNATIONAL REVIEW

EXHIBITION REVIEWS

February 2011



View of Daniel Hesidence's exhibition "Autumn Buffalo," 2010, at D'Amelio Terras.

DANIEL HESIDENCE
D'AMELIO TERRAS

Accepting that the singular masterpiece is no longer possible nor even something to strive for, Daniel Hesidence gives all of his works within a given series the same title. Thus all of the paintings shown in Hesidence's solo exhibition at D'Amelio Terras gallery last fall are called "Untitled (Autumn Buffalo)"; all are dated 2010 and must be identified by their inventory numbers. DH-0953-PTG, for example, is 54 by 72 inches, has a gestural chocolate-colored scribble in the center of a pristine white canvas, and is reminiscent of Gerhard Richter's wonderful *Tisch* (Table) of 1962.

In 16 paintings ranging in size from expansive (8½ by 11 feet) to intimate (three works have a larger dimension of 20 inches), Hesidence develops themes of shape, texture and color in an abstract idiom that owes a debt to de Kooning and O'Keeffe. Ultimately, though, Hesidence, born in 1975, breaks new ground. Perhaps attempting to get away from the jewel-toned beauty that characterized his last New York solo show at Feature Inc. in

2008, Hesidence keys his palette in the current series primarily to earthy siennas and umbers. On an initial read the works may seem similar, and drab, but these paintings reward sustained contemplation. Spend some time with them and they come to life, with vibrant violets and sapphire blues that incandesce through the browns.

The compositions are often made up of lassos or collections of roller-coaster loops, and the marks build in density toward the center of the canvas, sometimes suggesting an abstracted figure. In one of the two largest works in the show, daubs of violet, peach and Statue-of-Liberty green accumulate into a shape that suggests a four-legged creature seen from the side, perhaps the buffalo of the series title. Yet it is also possible to read the works as landscapes—even to discover landscapes *within* the figures—by virtue of their intricate textures, layering and perspectival effects. Outlined in white in another work, vaporous beings are licked by hellfire in the lower middle distance. At the other end of the scale, Hesidence's shifting imagery may be seen as an imagined view at the cellular or molecular level.

Like Richter, Hesidence is both a student

and a master of technique. Experiments with paint application are evident throughout. Paint is laid onto the canvas not only via long, streaky brushstrokes, but also using non-brush implements that leave track- or patternlike marks, or clumps. Recurring small white clusters strung together in a line may remind you of dinosaur vertebrae or cat footprints on a car. Sudden shifts in the thickness and texture of the paint can be thrilling, like the vertiginous feeling produced by a sudden lack of focus in film. But the works go beyond skilled execution. Their content feels deep and true; this is technique having found its purpose.

—Jeff Frederick

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

DANIEL HESIDENCE: 'Autumn Buffalo'

By ROBERTA SMITH
Published: December 16, 2010

D'Amelio Terras

525 West 22nd Street

Chelsea

Through Thursday

The weird, fleshy wildness intermittently present in Daniel Hesidence's paintings is coming into its own. His latest canvases seem not so much painted as flayed, with paint applied in long, smooth smears that bring to mind blurred surfaces or racing clouds. The 12 paintings, some small, some large, are all named "Untitled (Autumn Buffalo)," which, along with their frequent use of earth colors, evokes cave painting and animal hides. Some of the works counter the smearing technique with powdery sprinklings of pigment and aerated, seemingly sponged-on color. In these a sense of suspension and momentary stillness prevails.

In either case the areas of color can be punctuated with tracklike scamperings of white or with vaguely fecal stabs of black that resemble the punctures in Lucio Fontana's canvases. Perhaps because of the titles I also found myself thinking of the small quick studies that the 19th-century American painter George Catlin made of buffalo herds and the Indians who hunted them.

The strangeness of Mr. Hesidence's paintings — their combination of rampant suggestiveness and eccentric physical specificity — is unexpectedly gripping. The best are rhapsodic weather systems, ephemeral, seemingly slight fields of activity that nonetheless can't be taken in all at once.

Like Huma Bhabha, whose new sculptures are making a strong impression at Salon 94 Bowery, Mr. Hesidence is mining postwar European styles typically dismissed by Americans. While Ms. Bhabha actively reformulates and intensifies the existentialist figurative sculpture of that era, Mr. Hesidence has turned to Tachisme and Art Informel with similar results.

The largest of the sponged-looking works here — featuring an amorphous bisonlike cloud in lightly dappled shades of blackish greens — announced itself as his best work yet when it was part of a group show at Cheim & Read in Chelsea in the summer. Now comes the exciting confirmation that it was not an isolated incident.

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NOVEMBER 15, 2010

52 | November 15, 2010 | The New York Observer

Galleries

By Will Heinrich

The Force of Color

New shows by Daniel Hesidence, Ana Mendieta and Bernd and Hilla Becher



Hesidence's oil paintings.

One night in the northern suburbs of Tokyo, after dinner in the home of a volunteer fireman, I asked about a framed scroll on the wall. The fireman explained that it was an ancient saying that translated as "the four seasons have no form." There is no clear line of demarcation, in other words, between summer and fall—but we can still understand that they're different.

This saying, meant to describe the basic nature of everything, happens to be an apt description of "Autumn Buffalo," a suite of 16 large oil paintings by Daniel Hesidence currently on view at D'Amelio-Terras Gallery.

The paintings look, at first sight, like completed figurative works that have been drowned, or else like vivid, emotionally unconstrained attempts to depict some kind of living flux; but because the brushwork is so deft, so considered and careful, they reveal themselves, on closer consideration, to be more like still lifes of a bonfire. There are occasional surprising sharp lines, sometimes in blue, but usually in white, so that they read not as parts of the

painting but as lines where paint has been scraped away. The layering of progressively sharper brushwork creates an astonishing holographic effect.

Most of the pieces are in exactly the palette you'd imagine from the show's title, browns and ochres with accents of yellow and off-white, colors that read as flesh, fire, dirt, buffalo hide or wood. Several of the paintings are marked with marching lines of repetitive white figures, like the hoof tracks of an animal walking around the canvas, looking for a place to stop. The flamelike patterns could be inspired by the inside of a fruit, the inside of a heart or the inside of a tree—by any organic form cut open to reveal the hidden order, complex to the point of apparent chaos, inside its simpler outer shape. The most successful experiment with form, a multi-lobed blue figure on a chilly white background—in the context of the other, warmer paintings, this one looks like a color negative of itself—could be a moving image of something still or a still

picture of something moving, but it is, finally, only itself. The least successful, a smaller piece that looks like a figure eight, looks only like a figure eight.

The key to all these paintings is in those occasional, surprising white lines. If they had actually been gouged out with the point of a palette knife, turning aside paint to reveal empty canvas beneath, the message would be clear: Line would be the opposite of color, and color's meaning would be inseparable from its ambiguity. But this emptiness is an illusion. White is also a color; the lines are also paint; and it's the ambiguity that isn't real.

One artist untroubled by doubts about the force and reality of color was Ana Mendieta. Born in Cuba in 1948, and sent to the United States with a sister at age 12, Ms. Mendieta died, in New York, 25 years ago, and to commemorate that unhappy anniversary, Galerie Lelong is showing never-before-seen photos, slides, videos and artifacts from throughout her short career. Many of them document her siluetas, works

in which she dug, impressed, exploded or burnt the shape of her own body directly on or into the earth. Although most of the images are documenting time-based pieces whose main thrust was performance—some of the work on display is also work in its own right—they all display the same formal coherence and beautiful intensity.

Mendieta's reds are bloody because, often enough, they are actually blood.

Ms. Mendieta's reds are bloody because, often enough, they are actually blood—the bloody red print of a body on a white shroud; the residue of two bloody arms dragged painfully down a wall—so that even when the red is actually acrylic paint, as in *El Laberinto de Venus*, which shows

a primordially obese female figure in outline with spirals for genitals and breasts, it still strikes the eye as forcefully as blood. Another piece, *People Looking at Blood, Moffitt*, documented in 35-millimeter color slides, shows people stopping to look at or walking past a vivid, recent bloodstain on the sidewalk. Altogether Ms. Mendieta's colors are what the psychotherapist Max Luescher calls "psychological primaries": Red is always blood, green is grass and a bluish-black is the night.

On the other hand, some artists create extraordinary ranges of color without using color at all. Across the street from "Autumn Buffalo," Sonnabend Gallery is showing 26 of Bernd and Hilla Becher's pristine photographs of New York water towers, as well as six newly constructed "typologies." Without ever tipping over fully into either black or white, the Bechers used subtle distinctions of gray to construct forms of perfect clarity.

editorial@observer.com



One of Mendieta's people.



Nov 25 – Dec 1 2010

Daniel Hesidence, “Autumn Buffalo”

★★★★★

D'Amelio Terras, through Dec 23
(see Chelsea)

For the past few years, Daniel Hesidence has been making abstract works from the outlines of animal figures and vaguely human/vaguely alien faces, usually delivered in hypnotic colors and a style of painting redolent of Art Informel's Jean Fautrier and Henri Michaux.

His latest “symphonic suite,” as he calls each series, is half inspired by the iconic American bison, that hefty beast. The most distinct evocation of the wild mammal comes in the show's largest work. It consists of blotches and a few dispersed slithers of impastos on white canvas. But these small marks add up to a buffalo charging forth. It's a knockout. The adjacent work, another large painting, has a sweeping sense of movement that is aided by twirling brushwork; it's as if the whole canvas is being sucked into an abyss. This dramatically energetic piece, at once calm and turbulent, probably corresponds to the other half of the



show's title, the one referring to the unpredictable season.

Most of the remaining works are composed of a tempest of brown, its shades conjuring up fury, fervor, hell, fur and even, in one small painting, chocolate mousse. Bursts of green, turquoise and purple peep out, with white acting like a scab on the canvas or a delineator of form. In one electric painting, it silhouettes what appears to be an angel and an extraterrestrial being with an amorphous, beastly brown body, fantastical sky creatures facing against one another. Despite some eh moments, this show disquietingly speaks to our primal fears of the natural and the unnatural.—*Nana Asfour*