

ARTFORUM

“EINFLUSS: 8 from Düsseldorf”

HOSFELT GALLERY
531 West 36th Street
November 19–January 15

“Introducing the Next Wave from Germany” is an ambitious, but deserved, subtitle for the eight-artist show Todd Hosfelt has assembled out of Düsseldorf’s ever-fertile Kunstakademie. The exhibition (consisting only of paintings save for two installations by Luka Fineisen) juxtaposes a range of styles, subjects, and perspectives. Ultimately, it is the artists’ shared technical talent and palpable appreciation for painting’s storied history that unify them as a “wave.” Their skill and conceptual sophistication with regard to painting owe, in no small part, to the tutelage of masters including Kiefer, Lupertz, Penck, Polke, and Richter. The enviable “*Einfluss*” (influence)—blatant in some cases, subtler in others—of the Kunstakademie’s recent faculty permeates the emerging generations’ work.

All eight artists display an appealing mix of academic training, art-critical savvy, and freshness. Standouts include Cornelius Völker, Bernard Lokai, and Driss Ouadahi. In his “*Meerschweinchen*” (Guinea Pig) series, 2003, Völker transforms a gimmicky subject into a profound meditation on how to render the intricacies of fur’s texture, sheen, and volume in oils. Seen together (here, as a set of nine), the “*Meerschweinchen*” transcend the “fluff” they ostensibly represent—these are serious paintings about painting. Another well-executed self-referential painting is Lokai’s *Landschafts block N*, 2010, in which the artist depicts eighteen land-, sea-, and sky-scapes in disparate styles quoting, in turn, the brushstrokes of Monet, Turner, and Richter (his teacher), among others. Ouadahi aims wider, confronting head-on perhaps *the* overarching critical discourse in modern painting: abstraction versus representation. In an arresting urban landscape motif, he synthesizes aspects from both camps—acknowledging the wide range of influences (from Mondrian’s grid to Gursky’s dizzying large-format architectural photographs) on contemporary painting.

— Mara Hoberman



Cornelius Völker, *Meerschweinchen #91* (Guinea Pig #91), 2003, oil on linen, 15 3/4 x 19".
 From the series “*Meerschweinchen*,” 2003.

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