

Demo Gallery is pleased to present John Paul Rosenberg: "There isn't any is," an exhibition of new mixed media assemblages. Known for collaborative projects and socially engaged public performances, Rosenberg challenges art historic traditions in order to create agency and find freedom within systems. For this exhibition, the artist uses humble materials and techniques like deconstruction of the traditional frame by cutting and transmuting the work's surface. These fragmenting techniques create voids in the work, but these spaces are not truly empty: they are spaces of potential. The "nothingness" creates possibilities that allow the works to physically become a part of their surroundings, and symbolically act as a window for personal and communal conditions, connectivity, untapped potentiality and multiplicity.

Remnants of materials, throwaway tarps and used drop cloths play a dictatorial role in the series. These pieces are selected by their historic context or disposable use: traces of stains, seams and underlying textures that inspire a copoiesis – a collaborative dialogue with the material. This dialogue informs the arrangement of fabric, then the compositions are painted using a variety of traditional techniques such as geometric abstraction, painterly brushwork or tromp l'oeil. Irregular sections of surface material have been assembled to expose the wall, making an expanded, multi-layered surface. These vacuities of negative space and elements like suspended strings, gentle folds, rolls and flexible straps that hug edges, tug, flex, reveal or conceal surface tension, move the two-dimensional paintings into three dimensional active objects. They become anthropomorphic "actionables" that are energetically engaging.

The structures in "There isn't any is" emerged out of the artist's introspective decision to base studio practice on an instinctual method that would produce fresh ways of thinking. Rather than looking out there for areas of discovery or inspiration, the artist looks inward to find what is both intrinsic and universal. Having grown up in poverty and conscious of notions of privilege, the artist makes analogies between the affluence and elitism associated with traditions of oil paintings on fine linens, and the utilitarian, disposable, 'democratic' materials that have no connection to aesthetics.

The mixed materials and techniques of the works act as different points of accessibility. Visible mark-making, imperfect masking or stitching are used to reinforce the idea of "the hand," a symbol of the ongoing relevancy, potentiality and importance of painting as a means for expression of both individual and collective understanding and connection. The approachable, characteristic compositions are a metaphor for the broad pastiche of voices that desire to be expressed and experienced in simple, distilled ways. Although there is no figuration in the work, the individual pieces might convey personal subjectivities, social reassurances or other psychological content. Agency may be found in the linear layout of the exhibition space, generating opportunities for reflection through unpretentious objects that invite relation, contemplation, appreciation, inspiration ...or nothing at all.