

THOMAS DUNCAN GALLERY

PRESS RELEASE

JESSE WILLENBRING

Sponsored by Homer

April 16 – June 4, 2016

We still need a voice that thinks before it speaks.

– Simon Armitage

Sometimes you have to sacrifice legibility to increase impact.

– Herb Lubalin

Thomas Duncan Gallery is pleased to present *Sponsored by Homer*, an exhibition of new paintings and works on paper by Los Angeles-based artist Jesse Willenbring. The show continues the artist's explorations of design, branding, and modernist tropes. Using Simon Armitage's book, *The Odyssey: A Dramatic Retelling of Homer's Epic*, as a compositional and typographical guide, Willenbring's latest body of work puts historical insight in conversation with the painterly gesture. Indeed, central to Willenbring's practice is the repurposing and amalgamating of disparate discourses to bring about new visual languages. As such, Armitage's reexamination of Homer's seemingly immutable project serves as an analogue to the artist's broader interests.

While he weaves together aspects of Homer's classic and Armitage's retelling, Willenbring defamiliarizes the legendary tales by converting them into fictional ad campaign mockups. Here Homer is not a revered author but a multinational shipping conglomerate looking to rebrand its numerous subsidiaries. Though the artist readily employs direct allusions to *The Odyssey*, the compositions are collisions of linguistic, graphic, and painterly activities that obfuscate meaning just as readily as it is generated. With this, Willenbring subjects the familiarity of Homer's poetry to a new set of parameters, creating a fertile ground for deconstruction, examination, and reassembly. What results is less an appraisal of the epic poem than a charged investigation of painting's potentiality. Therefore, a visitor's knowledge of *The Odyssey's* multiple characters and plotlines is hardly a prerequisite. Instead, one can read the open yet dense compositions as ciphers of inquiry as opposed to distilled representations of source material.

Jesse Willenbring (b. 1980, St. Paul, USA) lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

Exhibitions include Galerie Bernard Ceysson, Geneva, CH (solo); Laurel Gitten, New York, NY (solo); Locust Projects, Miami, FL (with Justin Beal); Art Los Angeles Contemporary, presented by Thomas Duncan Gallery; Santa Monica, CA (with Darren Bader); Thomas Duncan Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (solo); Galerie Franco Noero, Turin, IT (with Darren Bader); Sadie Coles, London, UK; Lehmann Maupin, New York, NY; Gavin Brown's Enterprise, New York, NY. This is the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

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