

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 exhibition continues the artist's ongoing explorations into branding, design, modernist tropes and physical gesture. Using Simon Armitage's *The Odyssey: A Dramatic Retelling of Homer's Epic* as a conduit for compositional navigation and typographical exercise, Willenbring's latest body of work is a studied synthesis of historical acuity and expressive heft.

Weaving narratives from Homer's classic and Armitage's retelling alike, Willenbring empties out the legendary tales, converting them into fictive ad campaign mockups. Here Homer is not a venerated author, but a multinational shipping conglomerate looking to rebrand its myriad subsidiaries. With this, the artist subjects the familiar to a set of parameters of his own invention, creating a fertile ground for deconstruction, examination and assembly. What results is not so much an appraisal of the epic poem, but a charged investigation of painting's potentiality. Hence knowledge of *The Odyssey's* multiple characters and plotlines is not necessarily required; rather, one can read the simultaneously open and loaded compositions as ciphers of prodigious inquiry, as opposed to distilled representations of its source material.

While explicit allusions to *The Odyssey* are readily employed, the compositions are collisions of linguistic, graphic and painterly activities that obfuscate meaning just as readily as it is generated. Repurposing and amalgamating canonized discourses as a means of bringing about new visual languages is central to Willenbring's practice. Thus Armitage's reexamination of such seemingly immutable material finds itself distinctly analogous to the artist's own project.

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

Exhibitions include: Galerie Bernard Ceysson, Geneva, CH (solo, forthcoming); Laurel Gittlen, 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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