

FLASH ART

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JOSH SMITH

FORTESCUE AVENUE

New York painter Josh Smith is known for his prolific output and the endless repetition of his name. In this, his first London solo exhibition, he fails to disappoint on both counts, producing a total of twenty-one paintings which can be divided into three types of work: 'palette' paintings, large 'finished' pieces featuring his trademark signature, and his 'artists books.' Before the show, Smith bought eight canvases, and used them as palettes for his larger paintings. Rather than discard these objects, he chose to exhibit them, revealing the process behind the 'finished' works. These larger 'finished' pieces are a mix of 'straight' paintings — often with Smith's signature — and collages. Smith adapts newspaper cuttings about his work, but also produces prints and collages from found images. Although Smith's involvement with printmaking is governed by an obsession with repetition and reproduction, the influence of artist Christopher Wool, whom Smith assisted, is also evident. The question applied to Wool's work — "Is it a painting or a process?" — could also be directed at Smith, although Smith seems to be deliberately concerning himself with the latter. Indeed, the books that secret Smith's obsessive list-making — endless names, objects and snatches of thought — are peculiarly appealing, both as tactile objects and as a mantra for everyday life.

Jane Neal



JOSH SMITH, *Untitled (Josh Smith)*, 2005. Oil on canvas, 155 x 120 cm. Courtesy of Fortescue Avenue, London.