

Funcke, Bettina

“Gallery Walks: Bettina Funcke on New York” (excerpt)

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Josh Smith's Luhring Augustine debut was a show of lush and apparently abstract paintings, recalling German expressionism. From the earlier name paintings for which he is known, Smith here took individual letters and used them as grounds for quasi-landscape painting. Halfway through the show's run, he swapped out all these pieces for new ones, insisting that it was the same show, just with different images. The gesture provoked a widespread and somewhat naïve critique that presupposes he did this to sell more works, or that he did so only when the first round sold out. But today's logic of selling in Chelsea is largely disconnected from what's on view. Sales pitches happen on a more personal level, or they respond to an existing waiting list. Smith's gesture is, instead, an act to be seen in the tradition, a way for him to challenge himself and the critics by not simply staging another New York gallery show of paintings to look good over sofas, but to generate a somewhat perverse debate around what it means to show and sell and what is left for the artist to do after a certain level of success. Or he may have just liked looking at his work in the elegant white cube space of the gallery.



Josh Smith, Luhring Augustine, New York, 2007

1 Erste Hängung

2 Zweite Hängung