

ARTFORUM

San Francisco

Liam Everett

ALTMAN SIEGEL

49 Geary Street, 4th Floor

November 1–December 22

There is something solemn, if not almost funerary, about Liam Everett's solo debut at Altman Siegel, which might be appropriate given its subject matter. The show features a series of paintings on Masonite, wool, cotton, and organza that have been stained with ink and acrylic, and then meticulously worked over with various corrosive agents like alcohol, lemon, and salt to create luminous abstractions that also depict the residue of erasure. The most emotive of these are draped loosely onto wooden supports and propped against the wall, where they resemble a lineup of four richly hued ambulance stretchers.

If not quite a requiem for the medium, Everett's thoughtful intervention is certainly aware of the mortality of that legendarily stubborn artistic idiom: four stretcher bars and a canvas, a formal limitation the artist attempts to think through rather than around. There is something of this driving a piece like *Killing Floor (or a proposed action plan)*, 2012, an expanse of mottled olive wool draped horizontally on bars and supported by wooden horses. Upon sustained viewing, the elegant depression of the fabric comes to evoke the imprint of a reclining body.

Through these simple and decisive gestures, Everett resists the allure of the purely optical or abstract. Instead, he offers something much more honest (for lack of a better word). His surfaces remain as afterimages—not records of a vain search for a zero degree of painting, but simply marks of labor. The literal imprints of the artist's work animate these pieces, the drips and stains underscoring the phantasmatic presence of a body repeatedly working through a singular idea into multiple iterations. Perhaps this impulse best accounts for the protean nature of the exhibition, from the panels and the draped paintings to the triangular supports—all of which achieve a stubborn, if enigmatic, physicality. It is a strange sort of poetry, made all the more effective by its rigorous logic.



View of "If I could sleep I might make love. I'd go into the woods. My eyes would see... the sky, the earth. I'd run, run, they wouldn't catch me.," 2012, Altman Siegel Gallery, San Francisco, CA.

— Franklin Melendez