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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS

Devin Leonardi

BROADWAY 1602
1182 Broadway, Suite 1602
March 15–April 23

Devin Leonardi's new paintings evoke a relatively unusual influence: the precise aesthetic of nineteenth-century American realists such as Thomas Eakins. In Leonardi's latest exhibition, this exacting style produces a sense of stasis when combined with straightforward, simple subject matter including landscapes dominated by sky or lone figures within interiors. In an untitled work from 2010, for instance, a nude child stands atop a piece of furniture in order to look through a large window. The figure's precarious position communicates a desire frustrated by the blue, monochromatic view of the outdoors, which appears just as barren as the room in which the child stands.

Such works convey Leonardi's ambivalence about today's increasingly disposable technologies, such as digital photography, and the way such developments may, in fact, detract meaning from the very instances they were made to record. In an inversion of this problematic relationship, Leonardi's paintings implement the comparatively labor-intensive medium of painting to capture seemingly arbitrary and random moments, such as the sun setting on an abandoned wagon or two alienated men standing on an expansive plain. The flat, planar style of the works and Leonardi's thin application of paint contribute an ethereal quality, causing portions of the works to appear as if they were fading. Combined with the work's forthright subject matter, this deliberate and simple linearity creates a subtle sense of nostalgia and moreover suggestively questions the increasingly complicated relationship between technology, images, and the culture they reflect.

— *Britany Salisbury*



Devin Leonardi, untitled, 2010, oil on canvas on panel, 13 3/4 x 10 3/4".