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Toby Ziegler at Simon Lee Hong Kong

by Darryl Wee 30/04/14 10:52 PM EDT



Toby Ziegler in his studio.
(Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery)

HONG KONG — British artist **Toby Ziegler** is set to open his first solo show in Hong Kong at [Simon Lee](#) on May 14, to coincide with the second edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong.

Ziegler's new body of work emerges out of an arduous and visually seductive exercise in tracing, revealing, and intentionally damaging a painted figure. His figures are laboriously constructed using digital means and transferred using oil paint onto aluminium panels before being intentionally "sabotaged" by pulling a cloth across their surface while the paint is not yet dry, or rubbing an orbital sander into the surface, as if to splay open the fragile painted membrane to cause the underlying luster of the aluminium support to show through.

Through this violent disruption of the painting's illusory unity, Ziegler explores larger questions of translation across artistic media, and the slipperiness of images that hover somewhere between pictorial reality and degraded abstraction.

BLOUIN ARTINFO caught up with Ziegler just as he was on the cusp of completing this new body of work to talk about some of his formal and thematic concerns.

Can you talk about your decision to use aluminium in your recent paintings?

I wanted a painting support that was dead flat and hard. I didn't want the weave of canvas because I was dealing with another grain within the imagery, that of pixels on a screen. I also wanted the coldness and luminosity of aluminium as I was painting very thin with translucent paint. However, the support effected a change on my process, or rather created a possibility. For several years I have been working up a painting to a certain point and then obscuring or obliterating part of it with paint, but the aluminium has allowed me to invert this dynamic so that I can get the painting to a point where I'm happy with it and then grind it off again with a rotary sander.

In both the paintings and the sculpture you repeatedly sabotage a carefully achieved form. Why do you do this?

I'm interested in works of art having different speeds. That can refer to speeds of construction or mark making, but also to different speeds of reading a work. I like the tension that arises from part of the process being careful and slow, and then there being a more spontaneous moment or period of accelerated disruption.

The surfaces of these works are unruly — some parts are covered in paint, while others reveal the aluminium support where the paint has been rubbed away. Likewise, the sculptures seem to be filled with indentations that have been caused as a result of their making.

Sometimes it feels like tracing the loss of an image or form.

The title of your forthcoming publication is “anticlimax.” Can you explain?

There's something fugitive about these new paintings. Viewing painting is generally a frontal relationship, but these paintings behave like sculpture in certain ways. The areas of revealed aluminium reflect light differently depending on your vantage point and so the viewer is compelled to circumnavigate the work and “stalk” the image, which is always in flux. The paintings that keep drawing me back to the National Gallery in London are usually the ones that seem evasive and frustrating, and so 'anticlimax' was meant to suggest a lack of singularity — the opposite of a money shot.

Toby Ziegler's exhibition at [Simon Lee](#) Hong Kong runs from May 14 through July 1, 2014.