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Interview

## FLAT PAINTING WITH JOSHUA SMITH

BY ADAM O'REILLY



The back room at Martos Gallery on 29th Street in New York has been mysteriously re-christened Shoot The Lobster, a new offshoot project space, and its second show hosts the work of the young New York monochrome painter Joshua Smith (not to be confused with the great painter of his own name, Josh Smith). Smith's work, made with a roller, is visually subtle and bold about the assumptions it makes of its viewer. Can someone look at a single color on a 16-by-20-inch canvas and have an emotional response? A whole history of modernism comes to mind with

Smith's reductive canvases, but upon seeing them the size and modesty of his color fields are quite unique.

"I had a conversation with a friend a few years ago and I asked them if it would be possible for anyone to make a flat monochrome painting now as a serious gesture," he says. "I became obsessed with the idea and it's all I do now." Smith looks to create new experiences, provokes self-awareness of standing before unsensational objects on the wall. For the artist, flatness is a way of getting beyond preconceptions about painting. Smith says, "Painting has become so performative, but illustrative too in that so much of painting and art in general is literally illustrating some text or trying to analogize some system which of course is a barely escapable situation but as artists we should do better than provide illustrations for our favorite authors."