

For immediate release

TOMMA ABTS

September 10 – October 25, 2014

Opening reception: Wednesday, September 10, 6 – 8 PM

Press preview with Bellatrix Hubert: 10 AM



Untitled, 2013 (detail)
Colored pencil and pencil on paper
33 1/8 x 23 3/8 inches (84.1 x 59.4 cm)

David Zwirner is pleased to present an exhibition of new works by Tomma Abts, the gallery's first show with the artist since 2008. On view at 519 West 19th Street in New York, it will coincide with *Tomma Abts: Mainly Drawings*, the inaugural exhibition at the new Aspen Art Museum in Colorado, designed by architect Shigeru Ban (through October 26).

One of today's most significant abstract painters, Abts has continuously explored the activity of painting. Starting each of her works without a preconceived idea, knowing only the size of the canvas and her materials, she gradually arrives at the composition over varying periods of time. Guided by intuition, the paintings' evolution is evidenced by ridges and uneven texture, with earlier layers subtly visible beneath the final coating. While abstract, the works are still illusionistic, and

shadows, gradations of color, a sense of movement, variations between light- and darkness, and three-dimensional, *trompe l'oeil*-like effects seem to evoke objects and landscapes. The portrait format of the compositions and their intimate scale enhance the sense of individuality and invite "face-to-face" encounters with the viewer, thus underscoring the mental process involved in their execution. Like remnants of thoughts, the physical objects take time to fully observe and always retain open-ended meanings.

Abts's layered process is echoed visually in the eight paintings included in this exhibition, which each involves shapes that overlap each other and blur any differentiation between foreground and background as well as positive and negative space. Their precise execution belies their original unknown state and further testifies to the "emotional rationality" with which writer Jan Verwoert has characterized their materialization. As he elaborates, "[Abts's] work is anything but expressionist. It is only at a second viewing of her pictures that one sees that the form she in the end finds, was preceded by a long and crisis-ridden process of finding decisions. At first sight they

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communicate an objective impression. But what gives these pictures their special character is precisely the fact that they do not openly demonstrate their emergent qualities, but slow down the process of revealing them.”¹

The exhibition also includes drawings by the artist made with colored pencils. While these can be seen to extend the use of lines in her paintings, and also begin with no prior plan, they involve a different process. Each series is based on a defined set of elements, and each drawing is completed in one session. They all follow the same format and are always untitled, in contrast to the paintings, whose titles are chosen from a dictionary of first names.

Born in 1967 in Kiel, Germany, **Tomma Abts** studied at Hochschule der Künste in Berlin from 1988 to 1995. She joined David Zwirner in 2005, and had her debut exhibition at the gallery in New York in 2008.

Prominent institutions which have hosted solo shows of the artist’s work include the Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2014); Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2011); New Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (both 2008); Kunsthalle Basel; and the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (both 2005).

Abts was the 2006 recipient of the prestigious Turner Prize, organized by Tate Gallery, London. Her work has been included in major international exhibitions such as the Berlin Biennial (2006); Carnegie International, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (2004); Istanbul Biennial (2001); amongst others.

Her work is represented in public collections internationally, including The Art Institute of Chicago; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Staatsgalerie Stuttgart; Tate Gallery, London; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota. She lives and works in London.

¹ Jan Verwoert, “Emergence: On the painting of Tomma Abts,” in *Tomma Abts*. Exh. cat. (Cologne and London: Galerie Daniel Buchholz and greengrassi, 2005), p. 46.

For all press inquiries and to RSVP to the September 10 press preview, contact

Kim Donica +1 212 727 2070 kim@davidzwirner.com