

Fredrik Vaerslev  
East Bound and Down  
April 9—June 20, 2014

Fredrik Vaerslev's work situates itself between place and non-place. Neither completely constructed or wholly transient, the work's locality is often diverted by Vaerslev's excavation of sites of architectural ambivalence (the garden, canopy, the athletic field or window pane). The prefix "ambi-" meaning "both" (ambiguous) and "around" (ambient) interestingly frames the uses and directions in Vaerslev's work that could not have been predicted in advance but also describes - and brings attention to - their status as quasi-passageways - not as a representation of the imbricated "possibilities" of a weathered or marked surface but a prosaic means of negotiating and mapping-out the conflated relationship between figure/ground, interior/exterior, public/private, mental/physical, representation/abstraction.

This intersection outlines three distinct bodies of work shown at The Power Station: Garden Paintings, Canopy Paintings and Trolley Paintings.

Vaerslev's Garden Paintings consists of inexpensive wood slats that have been cut, assembled and arranged on a steel armature. Paint is applied and removed, the anti-gesture is prioritized over the gesture. The steel support projects itself off the wall, taking the form of a barrier. This group of paintings locates itself on the exterior of the building, assuming the role of an entry gate or blockade, ceremoniously accepting and rejecting the viewer into and from the exhibition. Exposed to natural elements for the duration of the exhibition, the status of the painting is deferred to a precarious zone between preservation and decay.

Vertically oriented canopy paintings decorated in metallic-silver blue and navy adopt the "Dallas" aesthetic. Quoting heroic championship athletic banners, the paintings bring to mind an infected version of Barnett Newman's Zips. The modular division between line and plane is suspended in a hazy ground that appears to be simultaneously making and un-making itself. The unprimed field surrounding the sprayed lines reveals collected instances of weather that include sun, rain and snow gathered from outside Vaerslev's studio on the Norwegian Countryside.

The Trolley Paintings are made with a mechanized striping machine used to line athletic fields and the margins and centerlines of roads and highways. Motion and direction is limited, allowing only for chaste straight lines produced in a forward and back motion. Aerosol cans distribute paint along the surface of the canvas with the occasional malfunction causing sidespray and leaking outside the line. Marks are built up and collaged one on top of another creating a web-like composition of lines with various temperatures and transparencies. The day to day operation of the machine in its practical application limits any subjective mark making. A job, that an artist down on his luck or having given up, could find himself doing.

Fredrik Vaerslev's mode of address is somewhere between irony and embarrassment. Subtly jocular, the paintings are subjected to both chance based and determined mark making, employing recognizable motifs mined from various sections of cultural circumstance. This collision of social space formulates the heterotopia that can be defined under sites embedded in aspects and stages of life which somehow mirror but at the same time deflect, distort, unsettle or invert other space.

## THE POWER STATION