

McLean-Ferris, Laura. "Florian Meisenberg", *Artforum*, May 2015. (Print)

REVIEWS

Florian Meisenberg

SIMONE SUBAL GALLERY

In David Foster Wallace's epic 1996 novel, *Infinite Jest*, the young tennis-academy student Hal Incandenza dreams of a tennis court with lines and systems so unfathomably complex, they turn to liquid before his eyes: "There are lines going every which way, and they run oblique or meet and form relationships and boxes and rivers and tributaries and systems inside systems: lines, corners, alleys, and angles deliquesce into a blur at the horizon of the distant net." Nearly two decades later, we know all about networks so vast, intricate, and complex they are described as clouds—masses of data that appear to stretch into the distance in an intangible haze



View of "Florian Meisenberg," 2015.

Florian Meisenberg painted a fragment of a blue tennis court on the floor of Simone Subal for his exhibition "Delivery to the following recipients failed permanently," which pitted two screens at opposite sides of the court so that they took the position of players in a game. Each showed a live digital feed of a program (created by the artist in collaboration with software developers) that visualized a continual downloading and consuming of content. Superimposed on a series of grainy stock photographs of classical ruins—amphitheaters, the Parthenon, ancient statues with missing noses and limbs, and so on—a black viscous blob strung with twinkling blue and white stars undulated like a jellyfish made of dark matter. Every few minutes a 3-D rendering of an object appeared on the screen, downloaded in real time from an open-source online catalogue. Parasols, iPhones, and knives alike spun for a few moments before being swallowed by the dark globular mass.

This work runs the risk of reproducing the problem that it performs: The world is sucked into the hungry digital realm that leaves art and life caught between material ruins and screen-based simulation. Yet the serve-and-return between the two screens was mirrored and complicated by the other axis of exchange in Meisenberg's exhibition: one playing textural materiality against a smooth digital rendering. A large-scale triptych of three adjoined paintings of gradually reducing size is shaped to create the impression of a perspectival plane. At occasional intervals, Meisenberg has squeezed various earthy shades of oil paint straight from the tube onto the canvas in vertical lines so that the oil separated from the paint and left a sweaty stain around it. Pairs of broken pale-yellow lines extend at angles from each end of these thick marks, making a travesty of the illusionistic perspectival painting and humorously offering a reduced take on 1960s forebears: Martin Barré's paintings made straight from the paint tube or Frank Stella's infamous "what you see is what you see." Elsewhere on the canvas, small pastel

paint marks Meisenberg made by stenciling various sizes of SIM cards (which have grown smaller as technology has advanced) added visual confetti. Finally, the artist placed generic white plastic patio chairs around the gallery, each partially melted, so they appeared to be struggling to rise, flailing, slumped, exhausted—stand-ins for human frailty. It's the deviations from the basic model that rendered them pathetic and alive.

—Laura McLean-Ferris