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An Air of Intellectual Mystery: Noam Rappaport at James Fuentes

Noam Rappaport
By Donald Lindeman

Noam Rappaport at James Fuentes

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55 Delancey Street, between Eldridge and Allen streets
New York City, 212-577-1201

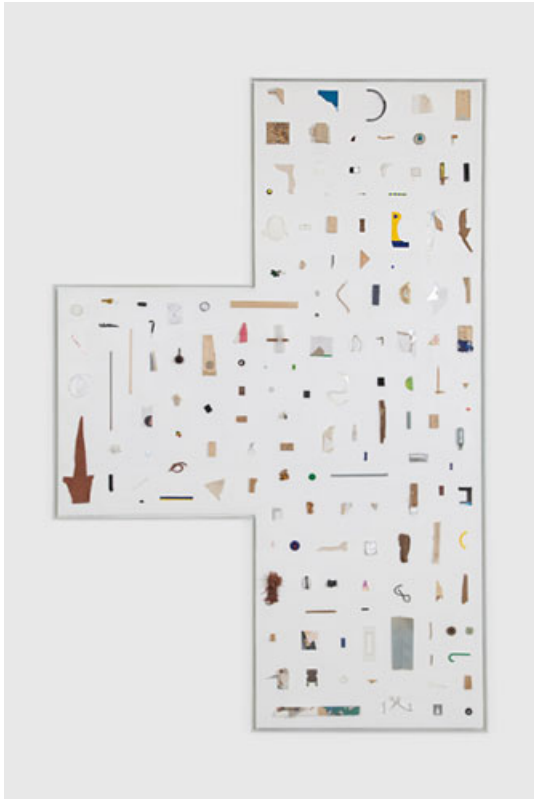


Installation shot of Noam Rappaport's exhibition at James Fuentes including, far left, *Untitled (Blue and Brown)*, 2012, oil and colored pencil on canvas, 104 x 58 inches, and second from right, *Untitled*, 2012, same materials, 102 x 64 inches (overall). Courtesy of James Fuentes

Noam Rappaport is a young artist (born 1974 in Sweden) coming into his own. His new works, on show at James Fuentes, show an obvious debt to Frank Stella's shaped canvases, with their broad, geometry-based areas of color. But Stella is merely a point of departure. While Rappaport has similar concerns regarding color

and geometrical precision, he allows elements of lyricism to enter his practice that would have been alien to vintage Stella as he slyly allows hues to bleed at the borders of his blocks of color and pigment to overflow along the paintings' edges.

Three canvases in this series stand out: *Soft City* (2012), *Untitled (Blue and Brown)* (2012), and, in particular, *Untitled* (2012) which features a central white area bordered by framing areas of matte olive-green. This shaped canvas, consisting of a near square appended to a rectangle, arrests the eye with an apparent precision that soon becomes destabilized in a paradoxical way. As you attempt to make sense of its intriguing compositional games and its inherent spatial qualities the white field dominating the center of the canvas expands, redefining your perception of the work, as it interacts with the white surface of the gallery wall. The formal geometries of the painting break down, and what initially appeared to be straightforward becomes confounding, as the composition's actuality and logic slip away. This air of intellectual mystery is accentuated by the low hang of the work, inviting somatic identification as well.



Noam Rappaport, Collection #8 (Victory Cap), 2012. Mixed media on panel, 70 x 50 inches. Courtesy of James Fuentes

Rappaport dwells on the problematics of painting. He collides post Renaissance pictorial space with modernist “self-consciousness” of the work of art as an object in

the world. His attitude toward color, in all the show's works strikes a fine balance between personal statement and a disciplined striving toward objectivity.

One of his more experimental and speculative works is the white T-shaped panel, *Collection #8 (Victory Cap)* (2012). Various paper and metal ephemera are affixed on its white ground, neatly arranged to suggest, by analogy, the workshop cum laboratory of the artist's own mind. The solid relief elements consist of improbable materials cobbled together. From a distance they look like items from a tool-rack, but upon closer inspection, reveal themselves as incomprehensible inventions that revel in a wry absurdity. The artist is not merely devoted to one overarching formal or minimalist way of making art, but has curiosity about the world of forms and imagery. This understated yet confident show has us waiting in anticipation for what he'll do next.



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Noam Rappaport, *Soft City*, 2012. Oil on canvas, 99 x 50 inches. Courtesy of James Fuentes