

**STEPHEN
ROSENTHAL**

**Islands,
Archipelagoes,
Constellations
Works on canvas
and paper
2006 – 2018**

29/09 – 03/11 2018
Opening
Saturday 29 September
6 pm – 8.30 pm

P420 is pleased to announce the first solo show by the American painter Stephen Rosenthal (Washington DC, 1935), and the start of collaboration between the gallery and the artist.

The exhibition, hung in both rooms of the gallery, features the two latest cycles of works by the artist, developed over the last 15 years or so. Already active at the end of the 1960s, after nearly five decades of research on *making* paintings, in these latest works Rosenthal achieves unique, unconventional results of reduction and abstraction.

The first room features a cycle of works apparently composed of white monochromes. These are actually discreet, elaborate paintings, prevalently pale, of an almost dreamy whiteness. Flares from which small signs, events, suggestions emerge, memories of something that is lost in the light of time.

The second room contains Rosenthal's most recent works, made over the last ten years. Here the result is not achieved by what the painter puts into the painting. What Rosenthal puts on canvas is more a part of the preparation than the realization of the work. The act of painting is simply the first phase.

Barnett Newman said, "An artist paints so that he will have something to look at." The world is already full of images, there would be no need to add more, but the image the artist wants to see is not among those that are there before his eyes. To use the words of Barry Schwabsky, to start to make space for the painting he wants to see Stephen Rosenthal has to erase what he has already seen.

Using rags and solvents, in a slow, meditative creative procedure, Rosenthal removes his own paint and erases any recognizability of the picture. In a process that can last for months, the artist makes what Samuel Beckett called "lessness." This is a strange state in which absence or intangibility seem somehow to become qualities perceptible in a positive sense.

Rosenthal erases, but he does not eliminate everything. The artist's hand allows hints of color to survive, memories of signs, clots of paint smoothed and rounded by a solvent that has not been able to remove every trace. Stains, smears, elements that tend to be as elusive as possible and at the same time tangible in the most literal sense of the term. Events. Faded memories.

What we see in Rosenthal's paintings, in a perfect balance between will and chance, is not what he has painted, but what remains, what has survived a long process of erosion.

"They are constellations," Rosenthal says, "but not necessarily stars."

A monograph is now being prepared with original writings by Barry Schwabsky and Davide Ferri.



Stephen Rosenthal, already active in New York from the second half of the 1960s, has explored the reduction of painting from the outset, through research on works made on canvases without stretchers, all the way to the latest *Microcosms* of the recent period. He has had solo shows since the 1970s at the John Weber Gallery, New York; Art & Project, Amsterdam; Daniel Templon, Paris. His works have been shown at the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; Kunsthalle, Basel; PS1, New York; La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California; Städtisches Museum, Leverkusen; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, just to name a few of the occasions. His paintings are included in the permanent collections of MoMA, New York; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Herbert Johnson Museum of Art, Ithaca; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo; Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, and in the Vogel collection, New York.