

Midway Contemporary Art opens three exhibitions this Saturday, October 17th, with a public reception from 7-9pm. The exhibitions, *800 Numbers*, *Bingo, wait a minute . . .* and *The Ground* will continue through December 5th. Regular gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11am to 5pm.

*800 Numbers* features a new body of work by the New York-based painter Ned Vena. The exhibition includes white enamel monochromes, a series of vinyl on aluminum panels, and three acid-etched mirrors. Over the past number of years, Vena's work has been in close proximity to certain periods of 20th century painting. The monochromes on view at Midway bear a strong relationship with Frank Stella's Black Paintings, particularly *Die Fahne Hoch*, a painting that has served as a template for abstraction in much of Vena's work. These works are constructed through a multi-stage process in which gesso is brushed onto the surface of the linen, followed by a layer of rolled on white rustoleum, an application of vinyl stenciling, the rolling of additional layers of enamel onto the surface, and finally the removal of the vinyl. Yet the artist often refers to these paintings as "poured" paintings, emphasizing that the paint is industrial and commercial in nature, poured out of a can into a paint tray as opposed to a tube. While not directly poured onto the linen, they do have a cast quality to them, existing as rigid objects that appear to be easily duplicated. This self-restricted manner of working continues in the vinyl works on aluminum where nauseating optical fields of blue and white stripes serve as a counterpoint to the largely mute monochromes and a selection of mirrored glass lozenges that have been etched using an acid commonly used in vandalism.

Ned Vena has had recent solo exhibitions at Michael Benevento in Los Angeles, Gallery Gebruder Lehmann in Berlin and Cohan and Leslie in New York. He has also exhibited in group shows at Kunstverin Freiberg, Frac Auvergne, and Gallery Dennis Kimmerich.

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*Bingo, wait a minute . . .* presents a selection of three of Alex Hubbard's most recently completed movies. Hubbard, who is also known for his work in painting, has been documenting loosely choreographed activities in his studio and other spaces over the past couple of years with a camera. Performers, including the artist, execute sequences of fairly simple actions such as cutting paper, pouring paint, stacking objects, and other processes that are both additive and subtractive. The final results are relatively short in duration and are not necessarily causally connected with a climax or conclusion. The overall impact is that of extending a perceptual moment in which we are slightly unhinged from our relationship with what is taking place before our eyes. We know the familiar moves and tricks that he is using, yet they induce a strange feeling of disconnect between what we see and hear, and our comprehension of it. The fixed camera position above the field of activity in

earlier works such as *Lost Loose Ends* and *Heads in the Dark* confuses the relationship between the horizontal and vertical planes. In his two most recent works, which include *Screens for Recalling the Blackout*, he has put the camera in motion to record actions that are more architectural and spatial, often with the activities just preceding the pan of the camera.

Hubbard has presented his work at Standard, Oslo; the House of Gaga, Mexico City; The St. Louis Museum of Contemporary Art; castillo/corrales, Paris; and Reena Spaulings, New York.

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In gallery three are four paintings that constitute *The Ground*: an exhibition that includes artists Felix Culpa, Todd Norsten, Conny Purtill, and Josh Rickards. The origin of each of these pieces began in Purtill's studio in Philadelphia, where the artist created relatively straightforward preparations of the grounds for paintings. Building up substantial grounds through alternating layers of gray and white gesso on canvas, Purtill then sanded the surfaces to a smooth finish and applied traces of graphite onto the remaining white areas – effectively neutralizing the ground. These final surfaces have a casual yet elegant ease about them, as though they were a found surface. These grounds were then delivered to Culpa, Norsten, and Rickards. While Josh Rickards essentially covered the surface with edge-to-edge plaid patterning using flashe paint, and Norsten's addition of some text left the ground largely untouched, Culpa's treatment of the surface of the painting is perhaps more notable due to its secretive nature. Whether anything was done to the surface of the canvas, other than embedding the painting face down into the wall, is unknown.

Felix Culpa lives and works in Paris. Todd Norsten most recent solo exhibition, *Drunkasaurus*, was on view at Tinderbox gallery in Hamburg, Germany this fall. Conny Purtill lives and works in Philadelphia. Josh Rickards lives and works in Philadelphia, where he recently exhibited at Vox Populi.