

ALTMAN SIEGEL

1150 25TH ST. SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94107

tel: 415.576.9300 / fax: 415.373.4471

www.altmansiegel.com

# ARTFORUM

Barrow, Theodore Ward, "Critics' Pick San Francisco: Liam Everett," *Artforum*, February 2, 2024

CRITICS' PICKS SAN FRANCISCO

## Liam Everett

Altman Siegel

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By Theodore Ward Barrow

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Liam Everett, *Untitled (a choir of one)*, 2023, ink, oil, sand on linen, 64 × 91".

We have spent more than a decade looking at Instagram selfies and figurative paintings built on grids—works specifically designed to be seen on the social-media platform’s matrix. In this time of hypersaturated narcissism, our existential dread persists, scrolling forward yet pushing us back toward abstraction. Just as the figurative revival of the past decade drew from the Grand Manner conventions of the eighteenth century, so too might the apt visual art of our era be besotted with caustic disenchantment, doubt, and an acute awareness of our precarity. The pendulum is swinging back toward painterly abstraction because it is capacious enough to reach us where we are, which is confused and sick of looking at ourselves.

Liam Everett’s radiant, indexical bands function like radioactive Barnett Newman “zips.” These strata at the edges of his canvases reveal the history of their creation via layers of stencils, sand, ink, and phosphorescent blasts of aerosol paint. An uncanny resemblance connects Everett’s *Untitled (a choir of one)*, all works 2023, and J. M. W. Turner’s *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemus – Homer’s Odyssey*, 1829—both works have dual warm and cool orbs of vaporous mist or smoky fire, suggesting spatial recession at roughly similar positions. The pair also evoke rapid changes in temperature and perceptual experience outside of the canvas. And while the Turner is nominally about the epic Greek poem, it is really about the temporal aspects of vision itself. What better place to confront that but in a painting, a site for careful, engaged looking. Everett’s palimpsests repel easy reads and quick, dismissive glances. His art asks us to turn our neurotic gazes away from our black mirrors and face the storm.