

ArtSeen

Erik Lindman: *Fal/Parsi*

By Barbara A. MacAdam | October 7, 2020



Erik Lindman, *Blackwater*, 2019-20. Acrylic, collaged canvas and canvas webbing on linen, 70 7/8 x 43 1/4 inches.
Courtesy the artist and Peter Blum Gallery, New York. Photo: Jason Wyche.

Erik Lindman’s intense, concentrated paintings enact “the art of the in-between.” These are layered works, paint collages composed of found surfaces set between two vertical poles and fixed to a field of white or black. The sandwiched matter of Lindman’s images oozes its way to the surface, often leaking out and dripping in translucent rivulets. The artist makes his acrylic paint earn its keep, transforming it into something surprisingly rich, impastoed, and creamy. On other occasions, he renders it water-color sheer and filmy in order to mark the transitions in an interior narrative progression.

ON VIEW

Peter Blum

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Lindman probes the liminal, the borderland, the undefined, revealing the potential of each work to emerge into expression and even, sometimes, defined form. The suggestion of landscape inevitably prevails as horizontal gestures stretch out across the canvas in variegated applications, while growth in nature is implied by vertical abstract structures. Bird shapes, too, are present, composed of built up vertebrae, ascending in spiky passages that strive for altitude. Lindman’s “birds” are reminiscent

of the anguished mythological and biblical figures of Hieronymus Bosch, while horizontal aquatic forms evoke the association of Christ and fish. The contrast between layered coloration and nearly recognizable shapes is found, for example, in *Pisces* (2018), where we see a reddish hint of internal fluids that segues into opaque black as it moves toward a tail at left. The elements of landscape, as both substance and idea, are like materials for collage.

Art, poetry, nature, and garden-variety junk are all elements of Lindman's suggestive bricolage images. There are touches of Francis Bacon in the watery, pinkish coloration of *Pisces*, and then, more surprisingly, traces of Alberto Giacometti in taller, more emphatically vertical paint assemblages. These elements may be viewed as lonely, attenuated sculpted figures set between vertical strips of plastic webbing that masquerade as paint.

Titled wittily, ironically, *Fal/Parsi*, the show plays on the Richard Wagner opera *Parsifal* (1882), about the adventures of a knight in pursuit of the Holy Grail. The young knight, whose name translates as "Pure Fool," is a reflection, Lindman says, on his own perhaps "futile" effort to create art that captures our current moment. The collaged elements in the paintings take us down multiple



Erik Lindman, *Silent Sun*, 2020. Acrylic and collaged canvas webbing on linen, 78 3/4 x 59 1/8 inches. Courtesy the artist and Peter Blum Gallery, New York. Photo: Jason Wyche.



Erik Lindman, *Pisces*, 2018. acrylic, collaged canvas, canvas webbing, sisal rope and luan on linen, 90 x 86 inches. Courtesy the artist and Peter Blum Gallery, New York. Photo: Jason Wyche.

paths at once, creating provocative contradictions—the material set at play with the spiritual, painting that looks like compressed sculpture, abstract passages yearning to assume figuration, transparent renderings connected to opaque pieces of detritus.

The show suggests an episodic process of coming to awareness. We could consider poetry, like Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) and the poem "Give Me the Splendid Silent Sun" as analogous to Lindman's painting. Whitman builds up the terrain of life piece by piece, line upon line, and image upon image, showing how we accumulate random elements found in nature, building them into our own mental landscape. Whitman writes of "autumnal fruit ripe and red from the orchard," "the trellis'd grape," "the blossoming buckwheat fields," "the torchlight procession," and then, too, "Manhattan streets with their powerful throbs," all crowding our minds with dense imagery. Whitman names and

describes these experiences directly, while Lindman conveys their physical and emotional texture with a similar tactility and sensuousness.

As we move across Lindman's compressed and layered landscapes, we find ourselves swimming jerkily through patches of abruptly shifting color and material, as in *Blackwater* (2019–2020). Or, we stretch upward, as in *Silent Sun* (2020), its collaged webbing holding us firmly in place, alone in a field of white. Lindman gives material substance to introspection.

Contributor

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