

ALMINE RECH

Matthias Bitzer

Caligothek

Feb 24 — Mar 30, 2024 | Paris, Turenne (Front Space)

Almine Rech Paris is pleased to present *Caligothek*, Matthias Bitzer's seventh solo exhibition with the gallery, on view from February 24 to March 30, 2024.

"But it is growing damp and I must go in. Memory's fog is rising."

-Emily Dickinson

Almine Rech is pleased to announce *Caligothek*. Drawing inspiration from the Latin term "caligo," which refers to fog, mist, and dimness of sight, Bitzer's seventh solo exhibition with the gallery comprises a site-specific intervention on the façade of its Turenne location and a series of dynamic double-sided paintings. The exhibition title hints at the elusive nature of perception, where the present moment remains veiled in ambiguity, inviting viewers to pause and reflect on what lies beyond.

The exterior of the gallery is transformed into a graphic constellation of bold stripes of varying hues and thicknesses. Bitzer's disorienting intervention recalls the eye-popping "dazzle" camouflage patterns primarily used for warships in the early twentieth century. Unlike traditional forms of camouflage, "razzle dazzle painting" was used not to conceal but to confuse, making it difficult to ascertain an object's relative speed or position. Similarly, Bitzer's site-specific painting transforms the gallery's façade into a threshold between the outside world and an interior space of contemplation, absorption, and diffusion where nothing is quite as it seems. Upon entering the gallery, visitors encounter a series of intimately scaled abstract works: luminous fields of color nestled within hinged artist frames. The verso of each work contains a seemingly unrelated painting reflected by a mirror that is integrated in the back of the frame. Ghostly faces, abstract forms, and delicate objects impart a sensation of submersion, a non-graspable image diffused by layers of time.

Bitzer describes the process of making these works as a process of "controlled coincidence." He begins each painting by working flat, pouring airbrush colors directly onto a wet canvas and moving them as the color spreads out across the canvas, sometimes seeping through to the other side. From there, two distinct paintings are created on both sides of a single surface, which are progressively developed in dialogue with one another. This infinitely looping mode of working carries over into the viewing experience, which generates a constant back-and-forth between the visible and the hidden. Just as in Schrödinger's famous thought experiment, where a cat is both alive and dead until observed, Bitzer's paintings challenge us to question our perceptions and embrace their inherent ambiguity. His work cultivates a space that holds a foggy mirror to our consciousness: a spontaneous, organic, moldable, infinite, simultaneous, and constantly expanding tangle of perceptions and sensations. And this, as Jean Tardieu writes, "is the painter's reward [...]: to superimpose the stimulating fields of the visible, to arrange differently sized surfaces, one perceived before the other, each from a different distance, so that space decomposes them and time penetrates them, but calmly, as befits the duration of images."

— Jesi Khadivi