

**Finbar Ward – Simon Callery
Wallspine, Painting, Archive**

22.1.-12.3.2016

Opening: Thursday 21. January 2016, 6pm

This double exhibition of works by Finbar Ward (*1990, UK) and Simon Callery (*1960, UK) focuses on two positions in painting that explore the limits of the medium in different ways. Both artists engage in a critique of the omnipresence of images in contemporary culture and reposition painting more as physical reality than as a means of representing reality. "Wallspine, Painting, Archive" is their first exhibition at annex14 in Switzerland.

Simon Callery tests the limits of painting in his desire to know what it can be and what it can do today. His titles often explicitly refer to his works as "paintings". A grasp of materiality is at the core of his engagement and ambition for the painting. For Callery, it is of consequence that the physical and sensual qualities of the materials are in equilibrium with the visual. Through these he would like to make it possible for the painting to be experienced in a direct and unmediated way. He often works with strong saturated colour, like Cadmium Red and Chromium Oxide green, which are impregnated into the canvasses. For him, it is important that each artistic decision taken can be traced in the completed work. Involvement with landscape and archaeology have informed his painting, which is evident in his recent groups of work. *Wallspine (Leaf)* (2015), for example, is a large-scale work that projects almost a metre from the wall. It is formed of 125 metres of cotton canvas that has been soaked in dark green paint (distemper), cut, folded and sewn into numerous open loops. This canvas hovers slightly above the floor. Its emphatic line and multi-layered internal slots underscore its three dimensional character and physical presence. The more object-like works such as *Cadmium Red Horizontal Pit Painting* also allude to painting. In this work, the form consists of painted canvas and stretchers layered one on top of the other, positioned slightly off centre. Here too, the internal structure remains visible and tangible; surface and interior space are treated equally. Simon Callery is constantly in search of strategies with which to draw attention and awaken the curiosity of the viewer on a sensual level. To some extent, his concerns take into account the process of perception - beyond the realm of the visual - resulting in experimental situations in which new insights are possible.

At first sight Finbar Ward's work seems decidedly sculptural. They sit on the floor or project from the wall into the room like objects. Yet the constructions Ward produces are born primarily out of the language of painting, using materials which point toward the traditions associated with the medium and by doing so exploring the potential of painting as a relevant practise today. Stretchers, canvas, linen and paint, the primary tools of painting, are packed and compressed into forms and motifs which nod to the idiom of Minimalism. In *Archive* (2015), for example, the artist builds up and compiles a record of both discarded and new material from his last year of production. Painted canvas and stray frames are assembled in such a way as to present the artist's ongoing tussle between the simultaneous doing and undoing of the work in its attempt toward a grand conclusion. *Archive* presents a very honest account of the artist's relationship with material and indeed the notion of painting as a subject in itself. Here, timbers marked with oil and graphite underscore the works painterly origins and reveal the cyclical nature of the works concern with reassembly and transformation. The focus, however, is not explicitly on repetition, as it could be in Minimalism, but instead on the changes that take place in the course of a process, and thus enabling work to develop out of another. Ultimately, it is the ongoing questioning of the status and validity of painting today that drives the artists work. It is a venture centred in keeping one looking for longer.