

Martha Schwendener 'Playful, With a Joie de Vivre',
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Playful, With a Joie de Vivre

Tyson Reeder's 'New Paintings,' at Canada Gallery

Art in Review

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER JAN. 15, 2015



"Chopper," which evokes 1970s culture, is one of Tyson Reeder's works in the show "New Paintings."
Canada gallery

It can be hard to make art seem like a casual, fun activity, although [Tyson Reeder](#) has had plenty of practice. Along with his brother, the artist [Scott Reeder](#), Mr. Reeder set up the General Store gallery, which sold paintings alongside Etsy-like knickknacks; helped to found the Dark Fair, an art fair (or meta-art fair) where works were viewed in near darkness; and helped establish another art fair in a Polish beer hall and bowling alley in Milwaukee.

For his current exhibition, Mr. Reeder's subjects are suitably informal. Many of the paintings were made last summer in Elaine de Kooning's former studio on Long Island. Several pastel landscapes depict the beach and its environs. Other works showcase emblems of 1970s culture, like a low-riding chopper motorcycle and a hippie-era van decorated with a palm tree and a glowing sun. Another painting features the interior of a shoe store selling flip flops and sneakers. It's the polar opposite of Andreas Gursky's chilly "Prada I" (1996), a photograph in which luxury shoes functioned as markers of global capitalism.

Lurking in the jokiness, however, is a soft spot for art history. In addition to the paintings, Mr. Reeder has fashioned two supremely postminimal sculptures from newspaper boxes taken off the street. One is rigged up as a crude fountain with water trickling down its side, like a low-rent Isamu Noguchi sculpture. The paintings hark back to artists like Renoir, Monet, Matisse and Bonnard (the gallery news release also mentions Florine Stettheimer and Bob Thompson), who celebrated "le bonheur de vivre" (the joy of life), as a famous Matisse painting described it. In the end, despite the sand and the sea, the show is in a gallery, with the lights on and a New York winter outside.