

EVAN NESBIT, *Porosity*
Eleven Rivington | July 9 – August 7, 2015

By David Rhodes

For his first solo exhibition in New York, Evan Nesbit is showing at both spaces of Eleven Rivington. Comprising painting and sculpture, the exhibition is titled *Porosity*, which describes an aspect of Nesbit's painting process, as well as, it could be said, the imaginative speculation undertaken to surmise what may structure the sculptures beneath their painted surface. The positioning of the sculptures (vertical and attached to both ceiling and floor) brings to mind the "figure/ground" issue in painting, except here, of course, the sculptures only momentarily act as "figures" to the paintings' "ground" when the white painted sculpture is in the viewer's sight line across from a painting. All the works are recent and indicate the current focus of the artist's interest in the vicissitudes of color as an optical phenomenon and physical embodiment as texture and material. There is always a clear sense of direct engagement with making in a hands-on and inventive way.



Evan Nesbit, *Cable Painting (Pot Head)*, 2015. Wood, metal, acrylic, plaster, and found objects. Courtesy Eleven Rivington, New York.

The paintings are made of dyed, cut and sewn burlap that is stretched; acrylic paint is then pushed through the open weave of the burlap from behind. The sewn pieces of burlap form an array of relaxed angular geometry, a kind of drawing. The inconstant globules of paint contrast with areas of dyed burlap in rich and resonant hues. The

physicality—dissolved from distance because of chromatic effects—is, on closer view, organic and haptic. The objectness and craft of the paintings exert the pleasures of surface. In complicating expectations of Color Field painting or gestural abstraction, Nesbit finds fresh territories to explore for paintings that recall artists as disparate as the Korean Tansaekhwa movement of the mid-1960s, who explored pushing paint through burlap, cutting and staining; Mary Weatherford; Keltie Feltis; Sergej Jensen; and Brent Wadden. In *La Brea IX* (2014) the restless amalgam of black, sienna brown, mid-blue, and white shifts constantly. The white paint pushing through gives the impression, from a distance, of an abraded surface, whereas in fact just the opposite is the case. Each piece of burlap sewn together here—the horizontal seam constant, the vertical misaligned—adds to a sense of movement and play. The size and the deep stretcher bars add to the visceral presence of the paintings without being at all ponderous. Rather, a humbleness and playfulness join in the general sensuous nature of the viewing experience.

The sculptures, titled *Cable Paintings*, incorporate objects—a Ping-Pong paddle, plastic fruit, a microscope—attached to the steel-wire cable of the title, that run from ceiling to floor. Obscured and covered, the objects co-determine with the loosely applied molding paste, tar gel, and plaster the form of the sculptures, which are very distant relatives of Giacometti's narrow, upright, walking figures. With *Cable Painting (Pot Head)* (2015), the cable is left exposed a few feet before the ceiling and floor. As it is in all the "Cable Paintings," the shapes and extended armatures that extend out recall fishing lines with multiple hooks and sinker. At



Evan Nesbit, *La Brea IX*, 2015. Acrylic, dye and burlap. Courtesy Eleven Rivington, New York.

the highest point of the structure, before the cable is revealed, a wooden shape like an inverted vase signifies that the other shapes below it, and beneath the modeled white surface may also be found objects.

All in all, references to art-historical sources and inspirations are presented lightly, all the better to appreciate the qualities of the works themselves as much concerned with painting's historical trajectory as the contemporary world encountered day to day. The many connections to previous moments—I could add Arte Povera and Supports/Surfaces—don't appear to restrict, commending this presentation of works that succeed in pointing to further, yet-to-manifest, possibilities for Nesbit.