

PAUL THIEBAUD GALLERY

Tom Birker

Mass Abstractions & DemoGraphica

September 9 – October 28, 2023

Opening reception: Saturday, September 9th, 3 – 5pm

Artist talk: 3:30pm

Paul Thiebaud Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of *Tom Birker: Mass Abstractions & DemoGraphica* on Saturday, September 9, 2023, with a reception from 3 – 5pm, and an artist talk at 3:30pm. The exhibition features two series of paintings by Tom Birker: *DemoGraphica* – the newest iteration of an ongoing series presented as an installation of 88 panels depicting everyday people in the post-industrial America of today – and *Mass Abstractions*, in which scenes of mass gatherings, such as concerts, have been rendered in a loosely abstracted manner. Known for his depictions of people and places on the margins of society, Tom Birker's new explorations into mainstream gatherings reveal his continual interest in situations where prevailing social norms breakdown. The exhibition will be on view through October 28, 2023.

Visually balanced on the edge between abstraction and realism, Tom Birker's *Mass Abstractions* series represents a shift in both his painting style and his subject matter. Focused on gatherings with large numbers of people, the works in the series not only depict times of celebration, ie: Queen Elizabeth's jubilee and the inauguration of an American president, but also places and moments where the rules of social order more easily breakdown, such as rock concerts, the Burning Man festival, and sports arenas. Capturing the raw energy and emotions created in these situations, Birker's loose application of paint causes the underlying image to dissolve when observed closely, only to re-emerge when viewed further back.

The over 200 paintings in Tom Birker's ongoing series *DemoGraphica*, by contrast, depict everyday people in the United States in all their vernacular variety. Rendered with realistic precision against monochromatic backgrounds, Birker has chosen moments of both jubilation and fright, the fantastical, and the ordinary as representations of American Society today for viewers in the future to contemplate. With 88 individual panels in this single gallery installation, Birker is as interested in the meaning and truths revealed in the aggregate, as he is in the revelations found in each intimate moment. From this large presentation, Birker has created "finished works" by selecting both individual canvases and groupings with as many as five parts for viewers to contemplate and reflect upon.

Tom Birker was born in Rahway, New Jersey, and was educated at both Rutgers University (BA 1993) and The Pennsylvania State University (MFA 1997). He has taught at the Parsons School of Design in both New York and Paris, and is currently Associate Professor of Art for Painting at the University of Texas, El Paso. Tom Birker's works have been exhibited throughout the United States and can be found in numerous private collections. This is his fifth solo exhibition with Paul Thiebaud Gallery.

For more information and press inquiries, please contact Gallery Associate, Greg Hemming at: greg@paulthiebaudgallery.com.