

ARTFORUM

John Riepenhoff

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There's a knowing humor to this solo exhibition, which features more work by others than by the artist himself. Though plein-air paintings of the night sky by John Riepenhoff line two side walls, the center, and the majority of the space, is devoted to other people's paintings. This would seem a thinly veiled group exhibition if the paintings weren't mounted atop pairs of papier-mâché legs for *Handler* (all works 2015). These are all legs—humanoid torsos are forgone in favor of clamps and metal rods—but their surrogate status is cemented by the fact that they wear Riepenhoff's own clothes and shoes. Paintings and plaster combine to create temporary sculptures that don't undermine authorship so much as flaunt it; there's no mistaking these individuated works for the hand of one painter. Where possible, Riepenhoff gives due credit; wall texts cite Kojo Griffin, Amy Pleasant, Amanda Ross-Ho, Michelle Grabner, and an unidentified Wisconsin folk artist, among others, in a range of names that suggests inclusivity rather than insider status. The effect is playful, engaging (one can circumambulate the sculptures, adding one's own legs to the mix), and a bit eerie—the hoisted paintings substitute the faces of these disjointed creatures, evoking sculptures that look back.

Riepenhoff's own paintings take a backseat here, in hang and formal impact. One large canvas, which leans against an entrance to the exhibition, has been slit up the middle to allow passage, as if the artist has deemed it a throwaway as well. A video, *Shaman en Plein Air*, tucked behind a work in *Handler*, features a paintbrush hanging on a visible "invisible" wire, as if wielded by a ghost in a campy film. At every turn, the artist erases, substitutes, or rejects himself.