

The New York Times

ART IN REVIEW

DANIEL HESIDENCE: 'Autumn Buffalo'

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Published: December 16, 2010

D'Amelio Terras

525 West 22nd Street

Chelsea

Through Thursday

The weird, fleshy wildness intermittently present in Daniel Hesidence's paintings is coming into its own. His latest canvases seem not so much painted as flayed, with paint applied in long, smooth smears that bring to mind blurred surfaces or racing clouds. The 12 paintings, some small, some large, are all named "Untitled (Autumn Buffalo)," which, along with their frequent use of earth colors, evokes cave painting and animal hides. Some of the works counter the smearing technique with powdery sprinklings of pigment and aerated, seemingly sponged-on color. In these a sense of suspension and momentary stillness prevails.

In either case the areas of color can be punctuated with tracklike scamperings of white or with vaguely fecal stabs of black that resemble the punctures in Lucio Fontana's canvases. Perhaps because of the titles I also found myself thinking of the small quick studies that the 19th-century American painter George Catlin made of buffalo herds and the Indians who hunted them.

The strangeness of Mr. Hesidence's paintings — their combination of rampant suggestiveness and eccentric physical specificity — is unexpectedly gripping. The best are rhapsodic weather systems, ephemeral, seemingly slight fields of activity that nonetheless can't be taken in all at once.

Like Huma Bhabha, whose new sculptures are making a strong impression at Salon 94 Bowery, Mr. Hesidence is mining postwar European styles typically dismissed by Americans. While Ms. Bhabha actively reformulates and intensifies the existentialist figurative sculpture of that era, Mr. Hesidence has turned to Tachisme and Art Informel with similar results.

The largest of the sponged-looking works here — featuring an amorphous bisonlike cloud in lightly dappled shades of blackish greens — announced itself as his best work yet when it was part of a group show at Cheim & Read in Chelsea in the summer. Now comes the exciting confirmation that it was not an isolated incident.