

PRAGUE BIENNALE 6
PRAGUE BIENNALE PHOTO 3
OPENING JUNE 6 2013



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Alexis Dahan: the sky is shaped by its city buildings, Rook & Raven, London

Katy Diamond Hamer



New York Tales...

06.05.2013

"He introduced other peoples' eyes into himself so that he could look at himself as though he were another person; and the moment that he did see himself his freedom asserted itself and escaped from everyone's sight because it was no longer anything but a look." ~Jean Paul Sartre from Baudelaire, 1947.



Alexis Dahan, the sky is shaped by city buildings, 2013
Image courtesy of the artist and Rook & Raven, London

Opening May 9th, 2013 at Rook & Raven Gallery in London is Alexis Dahan: the sky is shaped by its city buildings. The exhibition, the artists first in London presents a series of abstract works based on something only abstract in it's comprehension of infinity but otherwise straightforward: the sky. Dahan has used his own urban reference as a point of departure to make this body of work. Originally from France but residing and working in New York City since 2005, he lives in one of the most famous cities in the world, constructed by tall buildings intersecting the sky with geometric forms. An urban dweller his view of the sky, as most who live on the isle of Manhattan, is distorted, limited, sans horizon. Built on a architectural grid, each night the sun sets shooting rays of oranges and yellows through the narrow streets allowing for views of the glowing orb only occasionally and depending on where one happens to be standing.



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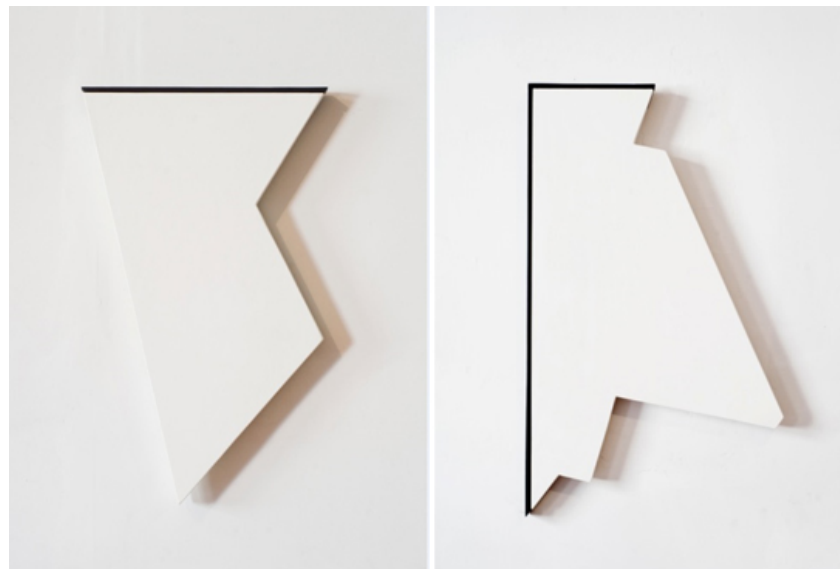
JEFF KOEGEL
SLOW CHEMICAL
ORCHESTRA

Alexis Dahan, the sky is shaped by city buildings, 2013
Image courtesy of the artist and Rook & Raven, London

For Dahan who makes art that is a direct reflection of his own philosophical interests, here Sartre's gaze, lead him to subtract these shapes through the lens of a camera and give them 3-Dimensional construct. In the vain of painters such as Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman, the artist uses the most simplistic language to arrive at what he considers to be a solution, a depiction of positive space that most within the confines of a city, would consider negative space. Unlike the painters of the Monochrome and Color Field movements, Dahan's work is representative of something. Executed with white paint on a smoothly sanded, wooden surface, the works hang not flush against the wall but with about two inches of air in between. The surfaces appear to float, white on white and only defined by their shadow. Rather than try to replicate or determine the color of the sky, which varies based on time of day, pollution levels and barometric pressure in the air, the artist has chosen to render the sky in a chalky white. Also as part of the exhibition will be a series of 16 charcoal drawings, 4 large prints and 2 photograph collages.



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Alexis Dahan, the sky is shaped by city buildings, 2013
Image courtesy of the artist and Rook & Raven, London

"With this work, Dahan is in essence acting as a modern flaneur, turning the literary 'urban wanderer' into an active, rather than traditionally passive figure. According to Walter Benjamin, the flaneur represents a mix of interior and exterior worlds, of looking out and being looked at; the figure's eventual cultural decline meanwhile coincides with the urbanization in Paris. Dahan recuperates this lamented personage for our 'age of the snapshot,' not through vernacular photography of the past or rehashing the oversaturated, hyper-populated streets of today, but through a foregrounding of the abstractions and patterns that emerge in everyday skylscapes."
From the text The Flaneur and the Utopian Impulse by Dmitry Komis.

Alexis Dahan: *the sky is shaped by its city buildings*, Rook & Raven, London will be on view May 9th-June 6th, 2013. <http://www.rookandraven.co.uk/>



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