

HYPERALLERGIC

An Artist Provides a Stage for Us to Make Political Decisions

Björn Meyer-Ebrecht's objects provide a stage, and the viewer is the actor who must perform the uprising.

Julia Friedman May 22, 2019



Björn Meyer-Ebrecht, "Untitled (Ceiling)" (2019), ink and archival tape on 2 sheets of shaped paper, 77 ½ x 81 ¼ in. (all images courtesy of Owen James Gallery)

Björn Meyer-Ebrecht: Uprising at Owen James Gallery is a spare exhibition comprised of seven wooden platforms and three ink-on-paper drawings. Meyer-Ebrecht's style is both cerebral and playful, and uses the viewer's intellectual and physical experiences to activate the works in the exhibition. Though Meyer-Ebrecht's objects are colorful and visually enticing, *Uprising* requires sustained contemplation to decipher its quiet political comments.

Positioned at standard eye level and masterfully using the space, the drawings hung on the wall initially dominate the viewer's attention. The platforms' simple construction, as well as a note in the press release that viewers may sit on them, further directs focus to the wall work. "Untitled (Audience)," "Untitled (Ceiling)," and "Untitled (Stairs)," all from 2019, depict the nouns in their titles. Meyer-Ebrecht draws depth expertly; viewing the works feels like peering into a world that expands directly from our vantage point — as if climbing a staircase, peering up at a roof, or glancing across the aisle at a theater.



Installation view of *Björn Meyer-Ebrecht: Uprising* at Owen James Gallery: "Untitled (Platform 3)" (2019); "Untitled (Ceiling)" (2019)

Meyer-Ebrecht positions the viewer as the origin point of a two-dimensional drawing that portrays a three-dimensional world. The viewer's presence in the exhibition space therefore expands the depth of each drawing to encompass the viewer and the gallery. In this sense, the viewer's very act of existence activates an explicit spatial relationship between all objects, placing each drawing in conversation with the other works.

The platforms, more enigmatic than the works on paper, are of varying heights, and perhaps designed to look homemade. They're crudely painted in primary colors. Some are the ideal height of a seat, others of a footstool. They're playful and lack pretension; at their most basic, they provide a welcome place to sit. Formally, they contrast with the ink drawings, which demonstrates deft artistic skill. However, once one grasps Meyer-Ebrecht's suggestion that the viewer activate the space, the platforms make sense as objects that invite interaction.



Installation view of *Björn Meyer-Ebrecht: Uprising* at Owen James Gallery: "Untitled (Platform 6)" (2019); "Untitled (Stairs)" (2019); "Untitled (Platform 2)" (2018); "Untitled (Platform 5)" (2019); "Untitled (Platform 3)" (2018); "Untitled (Ceiling)" (2019) Björn Meyer-Ebrecht, "Untitled (Stairs)" (2019), ink and archival tape on 2 sheets of shaped paper, 101 ¼ x 102 in.



Björn Meyer-Ebrecht, “Untitled (Stairs)” (2019), ink and archival tape on 2 sheets of shaped paper, 101 ¼ x 102 in.

The title *Uprising* has clear political connotations and provides further clues to understanding the exhibition. All of the works evoke either sitting down or standing up: an audience is sitting down; one looks up at a ceiling; one climbs stairs, either up or down; and one either sits down on a platform, in repose, or stands on it, to elevate one’s vantage point, or one’s voice. Meyer-Ebrecht’s objects provide a stage, and the viewer is the actor who must perform the uprising. A political comment perhaps lies in this potentiality, as there is no uprising without a decision to act. This ambiguity — sitting or standing, being active or passive — born of spatial relationships is pregnant with possibility, and Meyer-Ebrecht’s touch is light enough to let it evolve differently for each viewer.



Björn Meyer-Ebrecht, "Untitled (Audience)" (2019), ink and archival tape on 2 sheets of shaped paper, 69 ¼ x 62 in.



Björn

Meyer-Ebrecht, "Untitled (Platform 1)" (2018), wood, plywood, acrylic paint, acrylic polyurethane and screws, 18 x 26 ¼ x 21 ¼ in.

Björn Meyer-Ebrecht: Uprising continues at Owen James Gallery (59 Wooster Street, 2nd Floor, Soho, Manhattan) through June 1.