

Johannes Kahrs



Luhring Augustine, through Oct 22 (see Chelsea)

This Berlin photorealist hasn't entirely escaped the noticeable influences of Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans on his oeuvre, but in his latest show, he seems to be groping toward a more visceral style by throwing a touch of Francis Bacon's rawness into his painterly mix. Divided between hot-hued and predominantly gray canvases of varying size, these new compositions mostly feature flesh as a subject. The

ominous ambiguity of his earlier work, produced by subtle manipulation of scale and perspective, remains evident in gray pieces, but Kahrs achieves an entirely different sort of impact in the colored paintings.

Untitled (white) is graced by the torso of a male underwear model, his package straining under a pair of boxer briefs. He's flanked by two scantily clad women, each with a hand placed gently on his body, which draws our attention to his translucent skin and the bruise-toned veins running underneath. Hands are also a key element in *Untitled (man sitting)*, which depicts

a figure in T-shirt and shorts. His head cropped out of the frame, he sits on a stool with his legs splayed, and his hands dangling in between—both covered in bloodied bandages. The nearly black background on the left side of the painting dramatically gives way to a soft blue on the right, creating an aura that is equal parts disquieting and soothing.

The painting is all the more stunning when you realize that it's a self-portrait, based on a photo Kahrs took of himself after a bad bicycle accident. Here, the artist appears to strip himself bare, reveling in the frailties of the flesh as a form of catharsis. —Nana Asfour



Untitled (white)