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STEVENSON

26 January - 4 March 2017

Robin Rhode

PATHS AND FIELDS

STEVENSON Cape Town is pleased to present *Paths and Fields*, Robin Rhode's third solo show with the gallery.

Since 2005 Rhode has regularly visited the north of Italy, exhibiting with Tucci Russo, his Italian gallery, and at Castello di Rivoli, a museum of contemporary art in Turin. These trips have sparked connections with Italian art and with artists like Giovanni Anselmo, Giuseppe Penone and Giulio Paulini. Rhode has said:

I became inspired by the history [of Tucci Russo] from 1975 and the works from that period, from Arte Povera to the new American Conceptualists who began showing in Turin, to the early photographs of Paolo Mussat Sartor who documented the performances and gestures of the Arte Povera movement. I have this romantic notion that my exhibitions pay homage to the roaring Seventies of Italian art.

In contrast to Rhode's two previous tightly themed shows, *Paries Pictus* (2013) and *Recycled Matter* (2015), *Paths and Fields* is an open-ended combination of drawings, photographs and video that highlight his craft as a draughtsman and the influence of his Italian sojourns on his work. An emphasis on balance and symmetry is reflected in the selection of new and recent work, and the way in which monochromatic investigations of the natural world converse with technicolour interactions with the built environment.

In the new photographic series *Inverted Cycle*, *Lavender Hills* and *Paradise*, Rhode creates exuberant visual narratives in which his doppelgangers have playful encounters with colour theory. This flamboyance is offset by various dark-hued works, including *Untitled (Trees)*, a painting reminiscent of Alighiero e Boetti's coded ballpoint pen drawings, where the movement of the artist's hand controlled a line that covers an entire rectangular surface. In the *Paths and Fields* drawings created for Rhode's monodrama *Erwartung*, presented at Performa 15, broad, circular spray-painted lines suggest delirious, sweeping movement. In this work, like *Stone Drawings*, the charcoal sculpture *Burnt Key* and the new video *The Grass Is Singing*, Rhode presents a natural world of menace caught in balletic tension with the concrete jungle.

A study for a photo series is included for the first time, highlighting the precision of his practice, whether he is working on paper, canvas, the walls of Johannesburg or the walls inside the gallery. Like a musician, Rhode filters ideas through well-trained hands with muscle memory and motor skill built up over two decades. He acts like a composer in assembling this exhibition, bringing together

individual pieces that range from the peculiar, muted and elusive to the expressive, effervescent and even boisterous.