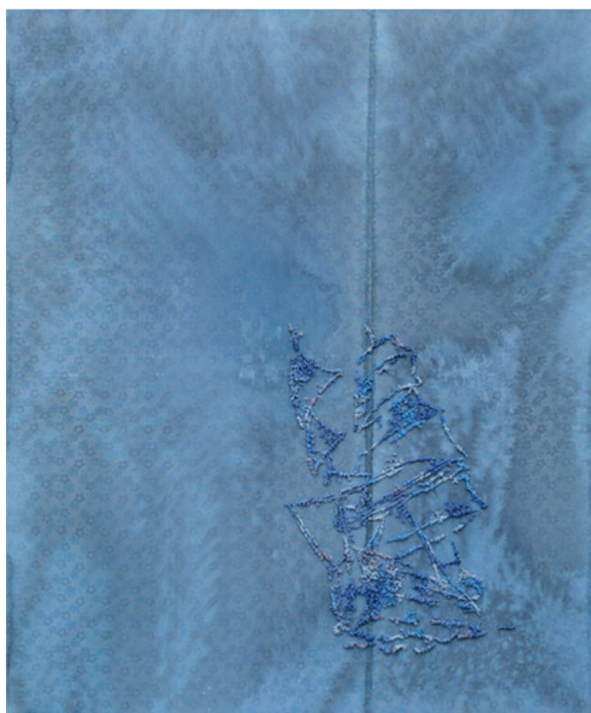


### Michael Raedecker

GALERIE MAX HETZLER | GOETHESTRASSE



Michael Raedecker, *enter exit*, 2014, acrylic and thread on fabric, 75 × 61 3/4".

When a painter embroiders a canvas, it is hard not to wonder what this technique—in a sense, drawing with a needle—means in terms of content. In the case of Michael Raedecker, it seems to have been a radical gesture against tradition, at least initially. When he started out as a painter in the 1990s, Raedecker developed an almost obstinate way of working, penetrating the canvas with a needle, mixing paint with thread. This was partly to tease the audience, by overstating the allegedly corny character of painting, but also to create space for himself in a medium that was surrounded by reflections on failure and fatigue. More than twenty years later, sewing and stitching have simply become part of Raedecker's signature and hardly seem recalcitrant. There are other factors to decide whether a work has "edge" or not.

If Raedecker's paintings had to be described in one word, I would call them memories. Typically, a single, isolated motif, such as a house, a ship, or a plant, appears on a monochrome field that reveals differences in tone and texture. The fabric appears aged. Thus, a suggestive, mental space is created on which the stitched motif floats as if a fragment of memory.

In this exhibition, "record," Raedecker presented nine works, all from 2014. For the first time, he used existing fabrics, with pre-printed patterns of flowers, squares, or stars; for most of the paintings, therefore, the surface already had a history before Raedecker ever touched it. Most works in the show, too, were assembled from disparate bits of fabric sewn together. In *enter exit*, we see a sailing ship reminiscent of those in old Dutch sea paintings, but here the vessel is an isolated motif sewn onto a patterned fabric that has been overpainted with a transparent blue coating. Then a darker-blue paint seems to have been dripped over the canvas to spread in different directions, as if the wind were blowing the paint apart, feeding the suggestion that we are looking at a stormy sky. The result is a simultaneously melancholy and ironic scene, a work that somehow ridicules a genre while also seriously extending it.

This dark blue appears in all the works, save one. Yet Raedecker's use of the color does not seem monotonous; within it, there are many nuances in tone to be found. My favorite moment in the show was the juxtaposition between the only painting in which it was lacking, the white *target*, and the facing *pillar*. Both works show fragments of houses and are made up of a series of vertical strips of linen. They look rougher, more distressed than the other paintings, and this roughness makes them vivid and sharp. Still,

## Artforum

Benschop, Jurriaan: Michael Raedecker

December 2014

they both also contain a certain softness, especially *target*, with its blue, pink, and yellow pastels that pop up like wildflowers amid the white field.

Whether a painting finds its “edge” seems to depend on the balance and friction between the material qualities of the work (the particulars of surface, color, and texture) and the depicted scene. In two works, *pattern* and *gravity*, the interaction between motif (here, skylines) and background seemed stiff: The scenes feel constructed rather than developed, and the embroidery appears too explicit a decision. But at his best, Raedecker employs technique as a tool and not as a goal in itself or a fetish, and achieves a natural interplay between surface and motif to evoke what could be called a mind full of memories.

—*Jurriaan Benschop*

[f](#) [t](#) [g+](#) [d](#) [p](#) [e](#) [PERMALINK](#) [COMMENTS \(0 COMMENTS\)](#)