

JUXTAPOZ

Art & Culture

Daniel Rich Makes Beauty Out of the “Flat Earth”

By Evan Pricco | 19 January 2023



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There is a vantage point on the mezzanine cafe at MoMA in NYC where the surrounding Midtown skyscrapers engulf you. There are layers and layers of grey concrete and glass windows that create a sort of blurring of your depth perception as to what is in the foreground and background of your eye. When I last saw this illusion, I thought of the works of Daniel Rich, who in his intricate process of layering and stripping away on canvas results in an incredible flat image of architectural complexity. He is flattening what is so rigidly substantive and heavy and thick. That is what makes his new show, *Flat Earth*, so stunning.

And this is where Rich begins his solo show at Miles McEnery, amongst the modernist buildings in Midtown Manhattan, yet with a blazing sunset of a palette placed upon them. They are hypnotic and surreal, far more abstract than his past work that created a sort of mimic of a skyline. This seems more akin to highlighting the beauty of the composition of modernism, how impenetrable it feels, how constant and permanent the structures are. As the gallery notes, “In this unique contemporary moment, when anything could happen next, ordinary street views and buildings toe a tense line between banal and significant. In his newest body of work, Rich expands on his decades-long investigation into the ways architecture bears witness to, reflects, and suggests underlying political narratives.”

I go back to that term and what it means to us now, how much it has evolved over the past few years: permanence. Rich paints as if the structures we have created will last forever, only changing through our ability to change around them. —Evan Pricco