

## MICHAL BUDNY JOHNEN GALERIE - BERLIN



The monochrome painting — on an axis between a screen-like element of decor and a pictorial erasure; between illusionistic ambiguity and blunt materiality — has become a staple brand of contemporary formalism, exemplified by the work of Sergej Jensen, Gedi Sebony and Michal Budny. Painting is brought close to the condition of furniture while never relinquishing the ghost of modernist aspiration. Michal Budny's "Apollo" series seems haunted by processes that have left them smeared or dusted by their traces. The thirteen paintings, all 54 x 44 cm and painted on fine paper stretched over thin stretchers, often reveal color and incident on their reverse side, as a ghostly bleed through the translucent paper. Most are whitish pale, but the left-hand panel of the triptych *Untitled 09* (2012) features a black cloud, a spray of charcoal dust like a shadow falling across its surface. The absence of light proves to be atomized materiality. In the right-hand panel the black soiling has been washed away leaving the surface like a photograph of running water. Simple manipulations of material — a cloud of yellow, a pick stain — produce

the effect of windows onto indistinct space.

Budny's art usually spills out into the gallery as installation, but here he has produced a relatively restrained and classical painting show, which strips his object-making back to its skeletal ingredients and reveals its essences, as well as its limitations. The fragility and delicacy of his process is also its over-aestheticism, its submission to being commodified as a chic accessory of minimal interior design. *Untitled 05* (2012) is the odd work out, the only one manifestly composed of paint — an overall seal of bright blue, punctured by a single rip, as though Budny had finally succumbed to impatience with the preciousness of his idiom. The breach in the one painting is all the more effective for its intimation of the as-yet-unviolated vulnerability of the others.

*Mark Prince*

MICHAŁ BUDNY, *Untitled 05 (from Apollo)*, 2012. Paper on wooden stretcher, paint, soot 54 x 44 cm. Courtesy Johnen Galerie, Berlin.