

Lior Modan “LONG | TONG” at Triumph

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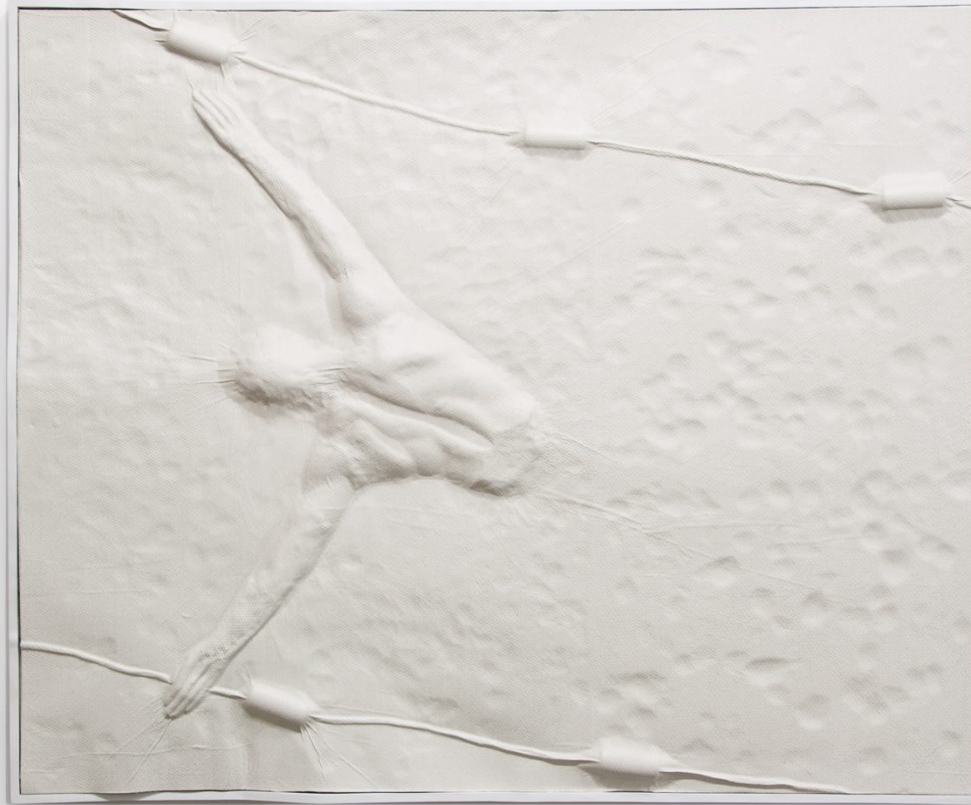
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Lior Modan's exhibition *LONG | TONG*, at the Pilsen gallery *Triumph*, is disarming in its teasing synthesis of abstraction and the commonplace. The surprise of Modan's pieces relies upon an uncanny architecture of space and environment; subconscious, yet methodical, experiments with sight.

In a conversation provided by Triumph's founders, Ryan Coffey and Ruslana Lichtzier, Modan's joy of slippery semantics abounds as he states that "the title is its own little painting . . . it's still part of the work, but it depends on its specific relations to the work."¹ At a cursory glance such a statement is precise. The character of definition within the work being dependent upon the nature of the relationships which compose the aggregate. However, in the case of Modan, this is complicated as one questions the basis of the relationships between, and which compose his works. The pieces' subjects are expansive and range from velvet emblems of eyes that form a silhouette of his cat to a chromatic, vacuum cast mylar drawing of GPS pathways.

Modan's blend of commonplace imagery with optical disorientation creates an optical phenomenon subtly akin to the "duckrabbit" in Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*. The duckrabbit is a popular illusion in which one can see either a duck or a rabbit. One perceives either the duck or the rabbit first, then secondly recognizes the other animal, never able to hold both images in the mind at once. This shift is wholly mental because the image can't change, complicating what had before seemed straightforward. Though the duckrabbit anecdote is a common means by which to demonstrate ambiguity, it is important to consider it also a recognizable image without any single fixed meaning.

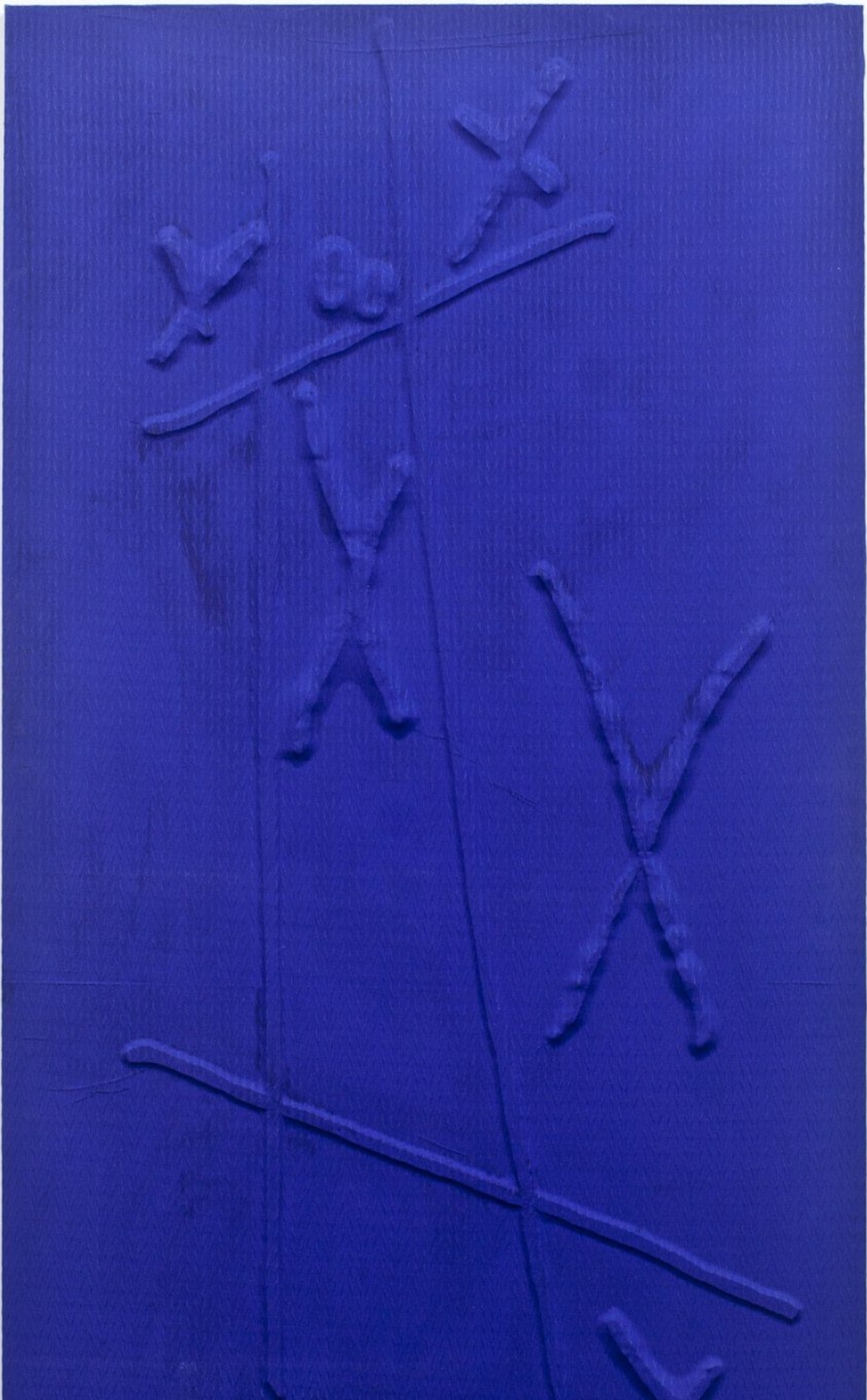


Lior Modan, *Modern Swimmer*, 2016
Wood, mesh, clay, foam, plastic, resin. 61 x 81 x 5 inches.

When questioned about the themes and subjects of his work, Modan answers that his pieces are about lies. Are the lies being generated by the artist or the audience? Is there a fixed meaning or does meaning exist within ambiguity, the uncertainty of the between categorical spaces? *Modern swimmer*, 2016 depicts an aerial view of a swimmer, mid-stroke, between the dividing buoys of a pool lane. Modan's uniform use of milky white mesh and resin creates the piece's dimensional relief. The single white color highlights the planes of the swimmer's musculature and the distinct shape of the pool's lane ropes and buoys. The overt sculptural elements are the primary source of tension in the picture plane which diffuses the clear boundary between the wall and the swimmer.

Modan experiments with boundaries again in *Hostility*, 2016 which depicts a game of tic-tac-toe on decades old found fabric. The fabric itself is a deep navy with a weave similar to spandex or lycra. Modan describes the piece as the "X's are assaulting the O's," implying a direct correlation to violence. This violence partially stems from the variation in the texture of the fabric due to the addition of the epoxy. The viscous nature of the epoxy summons images of bodily altercation. Modan again tests the boundaries of perception through unpredictable subject matter and process.

In the show's written materials Coffey and Lichtzier state that Triumph will have a four-month lifespan in which it will showcase exhibitions that offer a critical response to current events. Though one does not ascribe a direct politicization to *LONG | TONG* after viewing, Modan's boundary ambiguity could correlate to the uncertainty of understanding and pinpointing the factual within Trump era misinformation. The porous nature of Modan's boundaries is compatible with the creation and dissemination of fake news. Whether or not Modan is overly successful at relating this phenomenon of mass subterfuge to *trompe l'oeil* is not of the greatest importance as both illusions thrive on ambiguity. Within this liminal space, there is room to stumble upon unexpected meaning, but this zone's greatest strength is its study of absence; or the perceptions formed in the face of the meaningless.





Lior Modan, *Hostility* 2016.
Resin, wood, epoxy putty, fabric. 39 x 73.5 x 1.5 inches.

1. [Conversation with Lior Modan, by Ryan Coffey & Ruslana Lichtzier](#)

Annette LePique is a Chicago-based art historian and writer. She received her M.A. from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in Modern and Contemporary Art History. She presented her research on gender, performativity and new media at Concordia University's 2015 Constellations Clusters Networks Conference in Montreal.

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