

ARTFORUM

Eric Sutphin, Critics' Picks, Artforum, November 29, 2018



2018, oil, acrylic, screen print, and airbrush on canvas, 40 x 36".

When an artist bares an element of doubt in their work, they open a portal to the act of making. This productive doubt characterizes the art of Sam Bornstein, who, like Pierre Bonnard or Amy Sillman, is invested in searching and revision. Bornstein approaches painting from a position of uncertainty, allowing marks and thoughts to eddy on the canvas before they cohere.

Bornstein's current exhibition, "Daydream Workshop," comprising twelve paintings in a variety of media, such as oil, acrylic, and silkscreen, gets to the heart of his process. Take *Manic Cartographers* (all works 2018), an image **Sam Bornstein, *Horologist Club of Greater Coney Island*,**

of diaphanous yellows, browns, grays, and reds depicting three people fumbling with a comically unwieldy map. A man in the foreground clasps the corners of the guide and pulls it through the legs of another man as a woman frantically scrawls topographic lines over its surface. The activity being portrayed is not unlike the physical and mental obstacles a painter might encounter while attempting to coax an image into existence.

In *Horologist Club of Greater Coney Island*, thin washes of aqueous pigment outline a group of men and women, each of whom tinkers with a clock. The scene is illuminated by a warm light that evokes late afternoon sun—perfect for the iconic Coney Island landmarks glowing in the distance. One can't help but imagine Bornstein's timekeepers as proxies for an artist watching the paint dry. Here, he deploys boredom as a means to redirect our attention to that which unfolds slowly, and splendidly, in time.