

LAURA BARTLETT GALLERY

From: Artforum, *Critics Picks: Lydia Gifford, Laura Bartlett Gallery | Herald Street*,
Andrew Witt, April 2015

ARTFORUM

Lydia Gifford

LAURA BARTLETT GALLERY | HERALD STREET
4 Herald Street
March 26–May 10

A dense and irregular sense of materiality saturates Lydia Gifford's paintings. Her canvases are uneven, misshapen, and disfigured. Surfaces are ragged and broken; her paint is improvised and layered; her marks textured and contingent on the uneven folds of her supports. The ground feeds off her paint parasitically and vice versa. One cannot live without the other, and the result is that her surfaces appear ruined. Gifford's work echoes Robert Ryman's sustained use of unusual supports—bristol board, Chemex, coffee filter paper, fiberglass—as means to introduce variety into the monochrome. Surveyed from the outside, the monochrome appears as impossibility; viewed from the inside, within the process, the monochrome endures. Similar to Ryman's, Gifford's work is the continuation of the monochrome as a problematic.

How does the monochrome persist? In the case of Ryman, white paint is placed in tension with the dull colors of his support, sparring with them. In Gifford's series, "Brace (I, II, III)," 2015, wood, cotton, cloth, and nails are combined to rework the canvas like an object. The lower half of the painting bulges, resembling a wave, while nails punctuate, pin, and fold the canvas in a taut and regulating fashion. Gifford mobilizes the monochrome to challenge the depth and flatness of the field. The title of the exhibition, "To. For. With," emphasizes a relational condition: painting as preposition, painting as relation. These paintings force us to query: What relations does the monochrome engender? The two qualities of Gifford's process—prepositional and parasitic—dovetail with one another. Her work entangles a series of movements that challenge and undermine the status of the monochrome as enigma.



Lydia Gifford, *Bearing*, 2015, wood, hessian, ink, oil stick, acrylic, 16 1/2 x 15 3/4 x 2".

— Andrew Witt