

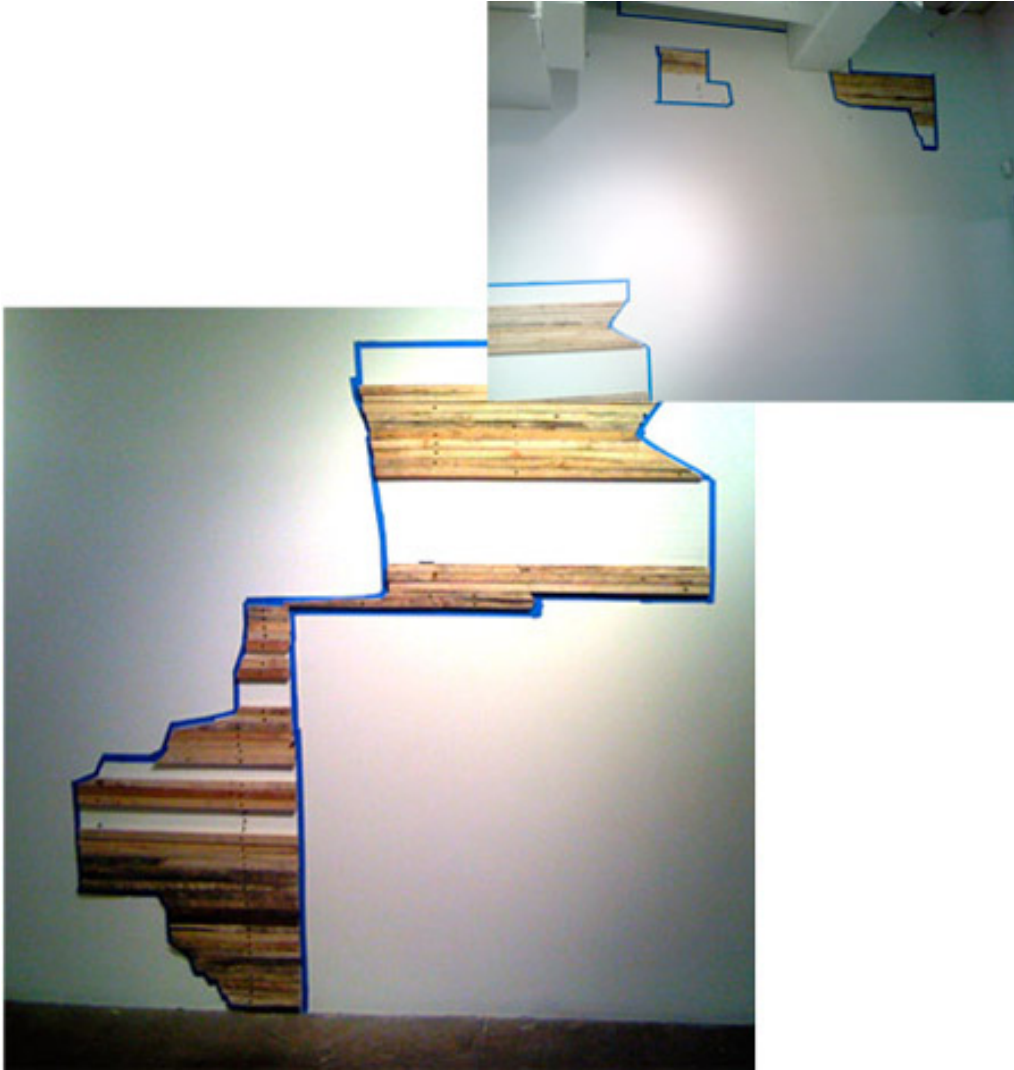
**The Highlights - Inside Lights**

SUPPORTING STRUCTURES: TAPE, ETC.

(Something to hold up something worth looking at)



Magnus Plessen, *Paravent*, 2007. Oil on canvas, 68.11 × 110.24 in (173 × 280 cm). Courtesy Gladstone Gallery



Lisa Sigal, *That Wood Piece*, 2007. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy Frederieke Taylor



Lisa Sigal, *Two Shades*, 2007. Mixed media, 118×27 in. Courtesy Frederieke Taylor/Lisa Sigal, *The Brick Piece*, 2007. Mixed media, 102 × 54 × 16 in. Courtesy Frederieke Taylor



Magnus Plessen, *Execution*, 2006. Oil on canvas, 75.98 × 111.81 in (193 × 284 cm).  
Courtesy Gladstone Gallery

Magnus Plessen, *Atelier*, 2007. Oil on canvas, 75.98 × 111.81 in (193 × 284 cm). Courtesy  
Gladstone Gallery

Lisa Sigal, *Untitled*, 2007. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy Frederieke Taylor

In the paintings of Magnus Plessen, tape is a template, molding brush strokes to its hard-edged limitations. Sometimes tape is buried within paint and then removed, revealing empty canvas beneath. Sometimes tape is just tape, humorously holding up painted sections, dangling from painted clotheslines, or sitting atop pigment. Plessen often applies color with squeegees, a tool generally used for cleaning surfaces. For Plessen, squeegees excavate, erase, and construct simultaneously. As he scrapes the canvas, his tools leave behind their own inevitable geometry. These marks accumulate like reclaimed second thoughts, giving a voice to deletion. Color glows through like a dirty neon tube.

Lisa Sigal's art is also one of functional ambiguity and material doubt. In "That Wood Piece," blue masking tape reverses its supportive role as it delineates architectonic shapes that climb the walls like vectorized fungus. Within these eccentric, yet possibly utilitarian silhouettes (maybe maps, aerial views, or floor plans?) wooden beams contort to fit the

outline made by ephemeral tape. There are also notations where boards have been screwed in, then removed. These areas are sites of subtraction that remain paradoxically active. In "Two Shades," Sigal uses two drywall panels to frame a section of faux-brick wallpaper. Each of these sky blue facades is a pedestal, a vista and back again, resolutely resisting a purpose or name.

## CLOTHES, BRICKS, AND OTHER COVERS

Plessen talks about making his paintings from the other side of the canvas, as if each brush stroke were turned inside out. In "Execution," he paints paint-shirts hung out to dry. These shirts are funny and sad shirts. As in Sigal's wallpaper shelters, flexibility and rigidity trade roles to poignant effect. One shirt is made up of pieces of tape, another delineated crisply by the blank canvas where tape once was. These fluctuations between inside and out, solid and void, make for both a great hiding place and a false front. The shirts take on the role of the figure with palpable aplomb. No one here, inside or out, they seem to say. The artist is gone, and his surrogates can't be trusted.

Sigal's architectural facades are similarly unreliable. They cover things up and then buckle under the strain. In "Untitled, (Refuge)," wallpaper and newspaper are wrapped up in a shaky structure, equal parts blanket fort and homeless shelter. The newspaper is used as the interior wallpaper. Unseen by outside viewers, it converts transparent information into an opaque hideout. Sigal's practice is defined by acts of cutting out, repositioning, or covering over, all emphatically surface level. It's this emphasis on exteriors that lets us know we're only getting one side of the story. In "The Brick Piece," Sigal puts support beams on display, and then undoes that inversion one better. A section of sheetrock is removed, exposing its now unneeded metal studs. Behind these ready-made prison bars hangs a piece of paper, crudely painted like a brick wall. A slight bevel of daylight glints at the paper's edge, reminding us that even a dead-end has its limits.

## INSIDE LIGHTS

In one of the Sigal's untitled works - and in one of her best moves - a section of drywall is placed over a window. Background becomes barricade and screen for the world outside. Pointedly, a small rectangle of sky emerges at the top of the window. Above our eye level,

the light is unreachable. It acts as a simplified stand-in, a logo for daylight. Circumscribed by Sigal's damaged geometry, the sun is re-appropriated as one more fragment in her system of hermetic equations. Within her playful interventions there is both protest and despair. She sabotages her working space by telling jokes, hiding out, and making escape plans. These acts of subterfuge interrogate our assumptions about fixed locations and roles, all the while acknowledging the limits of actions that can never leave the room.

Plessen's achromatic backgrounds constantly threaten to consume the imagery that sits uneasily on their surfaces. The white light that infuses his work is not one of unification or clarity, but rather an unblinking glare that overwhelms everything it exposes. This bleaching out also occurs beyond the canvas edge, as its corners blend into the brightly lit gallery walls supporting it. Seen in the right light, the paintings aren't isolated rectangles, but part of a continuum within the gallery cube. This immersion within the surrounding architecture embodies both an attitude of ambivalence and a reality of dependence. It's a conflict that animates Plessen's paintings. Barely there, his imagery hides itself in the spotlight, an act of embrace and evasion that's holding-for now.