

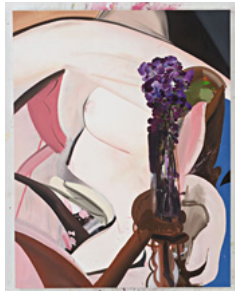
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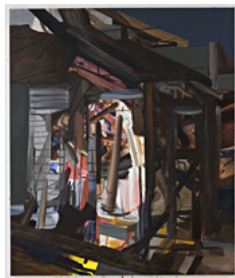
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Les Rogers
Large There
2009
Leo Koenig Inc.



Les Rogers
Be Still
2009
Leo Koenig Inc.



Les Rogers
Becoming Home
2010
Leo Koenig Inc.



Julian Schnabel
Portrait of Leo
2007
"In There, Out Here"
curated by Bill Saylor
Leo Koenig Inc.

LES IS MORE

by Charlie Finch

Last summer the veteran artist [Les Rogers](#) sent me a jpeg of one of his new paintings from his New Jersey studio. The minimal image thrilled me, a kind of *Wuthering Heights* brown cloud on a cliff, called *Large There*, which seemed to be a take on that old vaudeville joke about the white picture that is really a polar bear in a blizzard.

My heart anticipated a whole gallery full of such minimal pieces at Rogers' new show at Leo Koenig, but I should have known that each painting is a new adventure for Les and not the repetition of a style. Quite unexpected, also, is the improbability that this modest, veteran painter has become an overnight celebrity, dating a famous gossip columnist and selling his new work to Elton John. Rogers' new show is mixed, as any show in the arrested Boyland that is the Koenig program (except for the ladies [Nicole Eisenman](#) and [Wendy White](#)) must be, but when Rogers is good, he is truly excellent.

The best painting in the show is Matisse-like pair of naked breasts encircling a vase of irises and another great painting appears to be a bodega falling apart as if descending a staircase. The beach blanket nudes featured on the invitation are a tad too derivative of [Tom Wesselmann](#): this is always the dance with Rogers, who whimsically wears his influences all over his smock. *Large Bear* is indicative that this painter is best when he subtracts from his drawing practice and lets the color come forward, however damp.

Another Koenig painter, by the way, the expressionist Bill Saylor, has curated a grand show, concurrently, in the Koenig project space (which used to be the Buia Gallery). There is a killer [A.R. Penck](#) in this set from 1982, called *T-2*, a huge white on black study of the zodiac. Also featured is a hilarious portrait head of dealer Koenig, done in 2008, by [Julian Schnabel](#), in which Leo resembles a befuddled knight of the Middle Ages covered in muck. This is simply one of Schnabel's all-time best.

Les Rogers, "Last House," Jan. 8-Feb. 20, 2010, at Leo Koenig Inc., 545 West 23rd Street, New York, N.Y. 10011.

CHARLIE FINCH is co-author of *Most Art Sucks: Five Years of Coagula* (Smart Art Press).

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