



FINE ART  
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EDWARD TYLER NAHEM

Erik Benson:  
*Stacks*

September 21<sup>st</sup>- October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016



*Golden Tower (Stacks)* (2016)

NEW YORK, NY—Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art is proud to present *Stacks*, a new body of work by painter Erik Benson. Each landscape portrays the hard edges of mid-century public housing projects, whose utopian ideals are interrupted by the temporal, shifting structures in the foreground: the artist's still-life 'stacks'. Benson states, "still life compositions within my landscape paintings are depictions of mundane found objects collaged together to create a kind of totem of the everyday. For example, a plastic owl from the hardware store intended to repel birds rests on a stump with a foam finger stuck on one of its dead limbs. These makeshift totems portray subplots within larger landscapes."

Benson's *Stacks* series also reveals an evolution of the artist's political engagement with the landscapes of failed modernist endeavors, and with the poetics of a 'street art ethos'. In *Golden Tower* (2016), featured above, the flat gray forbidding foreground, marked by appropriated graffiti images, disallows the viewer any entrance or space of habitation within the cityscape depicted. Promising planes of high-rise buildings beckon from beyond the concrete bulwark, but cannot be reached. Benson explains this as a "curiosity in utopian projects which have become dystopian."

The artist's unusual process helps his ideas and imagery find synchronicity. Benson explains that he "builds paintings" by pouring acrylic paint onto sheets of glass. Once the paint has solidified and has gained its desired elasticity, Benson cuts various shapes using an X-Acto knife. He then peels the cut shapes from the sheet of glass and, using a method of collage-as-painting, arranges them onto the canvas to create a larger composition. Collaged constructions create a relationship between the visual information and the processes -- constructed images of an imagined environment reflect the process of construction and building that mimic the subject matter.

Erik Benson received a BFA from Minneapolis College of Art and Design and an MFA from RISD. His first exhibition with the gallery in 2010, *Detouring*, opened to critical acclaim after popular showings at The Armory Show and Art Basel Miami Beach. Edward Tyler Nahem Fine Art organized *Erik Benson: All City* in Madrid, in 2012, as well as *Sleep Walking* in 2013. Benson's work has been featured in many group exhibitions, including at Salon 94 and The Flag Art Foundation in New York City, the Neuberger Museum in Purchase, and the Mason Gallery at Rutgers University, among others. He participated in the Bronx Museum of Arts' Artist in the Marketplace program, and was awarded a New York Foundation for the Arts Painting Fellowship. Most recently, he was awarded the 2016 McKnight Foundation fellowship in painting, administered by the Minneapolis College of Art and Design, designed to identify and support outstanding mid-career Minnesota artists. Benson lives and works in Minnesota.

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