

# KATE WERBLE GALLERY

83 VANDAM STREET NEW YORK, NY 10013

## ARTFORUM

**Critic's Pick: Henry Chapman, Kate Werble Gallery  
February 24, 2017**



*View of "Henry Chapman: Phthalo Blue Red Shade," 2017.*

Henry Chapman's carefully gessoed canvases, smooth as polished stone, are adorned with pigments that bleed, à la Helen Frankenthaler, into their white grounds. Between his spare, painterly passages, which range from assiduously prim to flagrantly scatological, Chapman adds screen-printed texts: Some are taken from a European travelogue; others rehash moments from the artist's daily life or are just made up. If Enlightenment gentlemen traveled the Continent for enlightenment (think Goethe in Italy), Chapman's wanderings through some of the same terrain—Berlin, Rome—are pure indulgence, pleasure: One must see the Holbein show at the Bode, after all, not on Instagram. But there's a weltschmerz that glazes all this fabulous jet-setting, too. Maybe a visit to a brothel called the Artemis would lift the spirits—read about it in *Luke in Berlin* (all works cited, 2016–17).

In Greenpoint, yolky spheres linger below faint gray words crossed out by a tidy excess of ink, like an old master canceling his intaglio plate. Green Field offers up small, clocklike diagrams, with vectors that seem to record anger, sorrow, pleasure, resolve, desire, and pain. They are charts of human frailty and the vicissitudes of time. Yammerings about allergies and oysters pop up throughout Chapman's paintings as well. These narratives are too boring to be irritatingly narcissistic, and yet—surprisingly—they draw you in, likely because the works are so pale and enigmatic. Chapman practices a very funny, wan kind of seduction—honestly, the man can't be bothered for too much more.