

HYPERALLERGIC

Sensitive to Art & its Discontents

Can I Get a Witness? Working from Observation

by John Yau November 25, 2012



This is the first time I have seen a painting by Cindy Tower and I became an instant fan. Some works creep up on you slowly, while others hit you in the solar plexus with such convincing force that you wonder how you could have ever missed this artist's work. Such is the case with Tower. Her large painting, "Maintenance Walk" (2010), is dense with decrepitude.

At the same time — and this part is as unsettling as it is bizarrely exhilarating — part of the pleasure the painting delivers is the artist's heightened, almost hallucinatory attention to detail, from the crisscrossing rows of overhead pipes to the rusted and defunct machine parts littering the entire factory floor. You are not quite sure what to think.

Everywhere you look you see something rusted and eroding, in a state of extreme neglect, more evidence of America's long, agonizing decline. She uses oil paint (or a mixture oil and finely ground dirt) to depict dirty, often greasy things. As can only be done in painting, Tower slows down the decline — she asks the viewer to look at everything and to ponder what such ample disintegration might mean.

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