

# ARTFORUM

**Joshua Abelow**  
**James Fuentes LLC**  
**55 Delancey Street**  
**October 10–November 10**



View of “Abelow on Delancey,” 2013

Repetition is integral to the practice of Joshua Abelow, an artist who has succeeded in parlaying a individual iconography and persona into an emergent artistic presence in New York. The work in “Abelow on Delancey”—graphite drawings; small, medium, and large oils; and even a printed publication—conglomerate into a metaimage reflecting Abelow himself and a topography of the conditions subtending his practice. His stick figure man, often drawn donning a crude top hat and sometimes sporting an erection, appears over and over in the paintings on view. Never quite upright, the stick man is usually shown with slanted shoulders and a cocked elbow, and is occasionally accompanied by a solar disk, establishing a visual resonance with Matisse’s *Icarus*, 1947, a simplified figure that is itself the product of a few iterations issued from the artist’s late-career cutouts. With each appearance of Abelow’s stick man, we see the artist adding and refining a handful of self-coordinating gestures, including the direct use of his surname and references to his Web presence in six versions of the painting *Blog Blog*, 2013, and in two paintings titled *Blog Me*, 2013, which also include the directive in their composition.

Abelow is adept at driving home a point, or is at least keen to use all the artistic means at his disposal to broadcast a carefully composed image of himself. Consider the more familiar aspects of Abelow’s painting. Hard geometries disintegrate at their edges, raw burlap supports undercut the radiant colors on their surfaces, and a deft visual echo becomes just another dirty joke. These are accomplished, calculated transgressions, the workings of a talent acutely aware of his circumstances.

— Nathaniel Lee