

ARTFORUM



View of "Tobias Pils," 2016.

BERLIN

Tobias Pils

CAPTAIN PETZEL

Karl-Marx-Allee 45

June 9–August 13, 2016

How multifaceted, rich in variants, and rhythmic can a concentration on black, white, and shades of gray be? For a demonstration, see Tobias Pils's exhibition here. The artist, who lives in Vienna, draws the beholder of his work into a cosmos of painterly and graphic forms—structures and gestures that, the moment they are applied to canvas or paper, seem to vanish. The most distinct quality in Pils's works is his play with ambivalence: The towering image *Untitled (Yes&no)* (all works cited, 2016), for instance, initially presents itself through illustrations of varying perspectives but is flattened out by a nearly endless arsenal of lines. In the smaller-format *Untitled (Palms)*, the artist confronts the organic with the angular as a grayish floral pattern encounters dark beams.

On the lower level of the gallery, the twenty-four-page artists' book *Tobias Pils* and five untitled ink drawings are on view. The musicality of the painterly works on the upper level, which is flooded with daylight, gives way in this artificially lit space to austere forms and a reduction to black and white. On the pages of the book in the display case, as well as in the unframed drawings on the wall, black expanses slide into the image space and across filigreed lines. Delicate lattices are disrupted by monochrome surfaces, a vortex of lines is arrested, and waves are interrupted. The images withdraw from any attempt at pinning them down, an elusiveness and vivacity that constitutes their charm.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

— Franz Thalmair