

Andy Hope 1930

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Satanic imagery has proved inextinguishable in the paintings of Andy Hope 1930, from the black disk with horns that dominated *Silent Running*, 2005—a heavy-metal twist on Malevich's *Black Circle*, 1915—to his latest show, "Black Fat Fury Road." Twelve of its sixteen canvases, numbered excerpts from the series "Who Goes There" (all works 2016), were predominantly black, oppressively lacquered, and typically brightened only by pairs of small ruby-red triangular glyphs that read, just about, as horns glowing ominously in the surrounding glossy darkness. The paintings easily tilted toward geometric abstraction, nevertheless. Indeed, the German artist, who was formerly known as Andreas Hofer (in 2010 he adopted the anglicized name with which he's autographed his artworks since around 1999), has made a name

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Andy Hope 1930, *Who Goes There 1*, 2016, acrylic and synthetic resin lacquer on canvas, 23% x 19%". From the series "Who Goes There," 2016.

for himself producing what might be called soiled modernism. (He has also flirted with pop influences, painting Superman, Batman, et al., or otherwise bringing Jack Kirby and Suprematism together.) The diabolic recidivism, then, was apropos. To vouchsafe progress and development on a stylistic level would be false to Hope 1930's underlying concerns.

The artist's compulsive sensibility finds modernism's tabula rasa infested with evil spirits; the golden and silver ages of US comics harbor rank portents of American cultural imperialism. (The ominous barbs here, time clarifies, also resemble Batman's ears.) The spaceship floating amid an eggshell-blue void in *Sky Devil* is a painted, horn-accoutered version of one visible in an early, undated, and untitled collage, clipped from a vin-

tage sci-fi comic; the black egg beside it also appears in earlier works. *Two-Way Paranoid I* features two vertical strips of roadway (the "road" of the exhibition title, one presumes, which nods to the post-apocalyptic prognoses of *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015). Truncated, striped with yellow lines, the thoroughfares could also, in a pinch, be a pair of towers with glowing vertical windows, and seem to fold inward in shallow perspective—not leading anywhere except, perhaps, to a distant echo of René Daniëls's signature bow-tie motif.

Of course, Hope 1930's outlook—the road ahead cut off—might be a slyly designed license to coast, and coast backward, meeting his earlier output along the way. And at a historical moment when it's hardly unsurprising to walk into a painting show and see a dozen slight variations on one motif, aimed at a certain kind of me-too collector—this also emphatically not constituting progress—the predominance of black, horned canvases tempted accusations of market cynicism. Yet "Black Fat Fury Road" arrested the viewer as some of Hope 1930's larger, more diverse shows haven't. It was a matter of theatrics in the hang, and of literally black comedy. We began, reading clockwise, with five progressively suffocating "Who Goes There" paintings—the last veering from the format, a bloodred, horned tombstone shape at its center—before pausing for *Monster*, the triple-claw-mark logo for the eponymous energy drink painted in fluorescent lime green on bright white. Then we were plunged back into the underworld awhile, and so on, experiencing a periodic coming-up-for-air wherein the air, too, was noxious, and the accumulated mood was as much a player as any individual painting. By the final canvas, *Who Goes There 12*, the paired horn motif had transmogrified into claret-colored parallelograms reminiscent of military stripes or—and this was apparently the inspiration, from a sci-fi movie—a robot's malevolent eyes. Why cast out demons that serve you well?

—Martin Herbert