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ART & CULTURE

Photos Courtesy of Rehs Contemporary Galleries, Inc., NYC



MARK LAGUERRE, B. 1964, London Red,
Oil on panel, 36 x 30 inches

A Dash of Red

*A curated collection of works highlighting the color red,
on view at Rehs Contemporary NY*



opened on January 6th 2020, Rehs Contemporary will present A Dash of Red featuring a selection of paintings that highlight the use of the color. The works on display will include figurative, still life and landscapes ranging from Photorealism to Impressionism – a little bit of something for everyone, as long as you're ready for some red.

What is color? When you start to think about it, it really is not something so easy to define. Perhaps it is best simply stated as a characteristic of visual perception – one of the things we notice when we observe.

But color can also be so much more than just part of our observation. It can convey messages and conjure feelings all on its own. Take for instance the use of blue, which is known to express peace, tranquility and calm or purple, which may indicate nobility, wisdom and enlightenment and green which symbolizes nature, health and good luck – regardless of which, there is some internal connection we have to these colors and the way they make us feel. But one color is considered to be the most emotionally stirring – red.

Historically speaking, red pigment made of ochre was one of the first colors used in cave paintings dating back tens of thousands of years. Ancient civilizations colored their faces red during ceremonies; Roman generals adorned red to celebrate victory; in China the gates and walls of palaces are painted red – it is a color that has come to signify courage, strength, and power as well as passion and love.

Obviously, color fills the natural world and so it fills our everyday lives... but does red really affect us differently than other colors? The short answer is a resounding yes!

Scientifically, red has the longest wavelength and is the first color we are able to see as infants. It is known to be a physical stimulant – it can activate the adrenal gland which in turn elevates heart rate and blood flow as well our body temperatures. It can enhance our smell and taste, making us more sensitive to our environments. Studies even show that individuals perceive potential partners as more attractive when dressed in red!

With that in mind, it's not so surprising that advertisers use red frequently to catch our attention and why it's the color of choice for stop signs and emergency vehicles or why a woman may decide on a red dress and lipstick for a date. It is that same visceral reaction that artists aim to capitalize on by employing red in their compositions. Whether it was Old Masters adorning their subjects in ornate fabrics or Mondrian painting rectangles, the use of red was prominent and intentional.

Many of today's contemporary artists maintain that same strategy by attempting to play off our biological reactions to color. It can be seen in Cesar Santander's Lips with Rose, Mark Lague's London Red, or even something as simple as Beth Sistrunk's Red Velvet Cake.