

CRITICS' PICKS



Raoul De Keyser, *March 7, 1990, 1990*, pencil, ink and gesso on paper, 13 1/2 x 10 3/4"

BERLIN

Raoul De Keyser

GALERIE BARBARA WEISS
Kohlfurter Strasse 41/43
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The title centerpiece of Raoul De Keyser's exhibition at Galerie Barbara Weiss is "March 7, 1990," a series of twelve works on paper created on the eponymous date. Each is executed in a monochrome scheme of pencil, ink, and gesso, and while most refer to paintings the artist had already made, a couple of the motifs would not find their way onto canvas for another few years. These formations of hard-angled shapes have the fast, gestural

quality of calligraphy or signage. You start to suspect they make up a kind of language, a suspicion that extends to the accompanying twelve paintings, all more or less directly related to that day in 1990.

De Keyser's paintings certainly have a graphic and, at first glance, flat character. The simple forms of the paper works appear here in sun-blached hues: the red of an old Coca-Cola parasol, a black gone cracked and brownish, an unlovable piglike beige. It's easy to imagine the temptation of the exhibition photographer to help these works by increasing their brightness and contrast in editing. But the subtle way in which the paintings resist general appeal, in fact, only speaks to the distinction of their maker. As you spend time with them, the internal life of the works slowly makes its way to the surface, as flatness gives way to errant brush strokes and the quiet drama of colors competing for light. From studying the relationship between the "March 7, 1990" series and the paintings, we learn that language, in De Keyser's work, is only a scaffold for a complex mode of becoming, and that time can never be tidily contained by its designation in the calendar, but sprawls or seeps through every single canvas.

— *Kristian Vistrup Madsen*