



UNDERPIN

NICHOLAS JOHN JONES + ANDREW SMALDONE

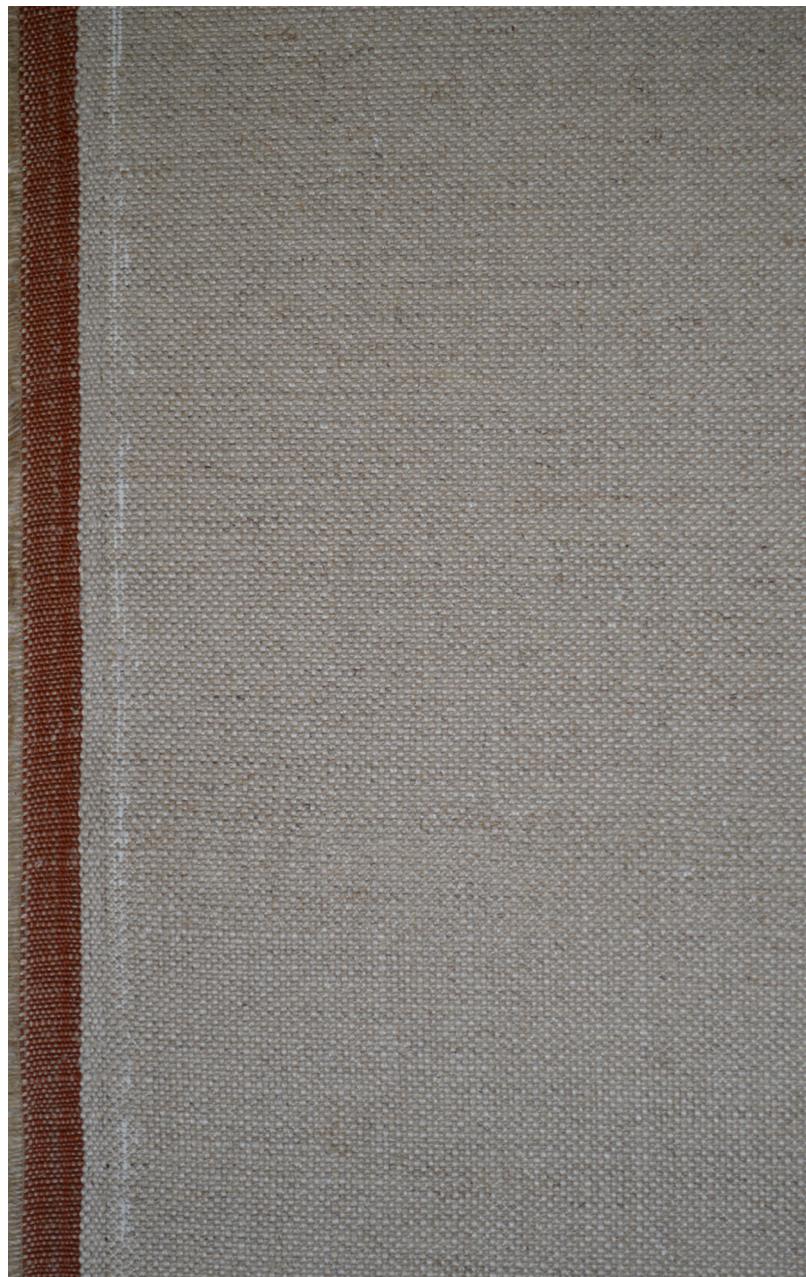
November 28 / December 20, 2015

Opening: November 28 - 18,00
EGG VISUAL ART, Livorno

Andrew Smaldone was reading an interview with Belgian artist Jef Verheyen when a particular comment caught his eye. Verheyen said, "Fontana was like a father or an older brother to me. I learned so much from him. But you could also turn the whole thing around and ask what Fontana learned from me. For example, once he had seen my canvases, he would only buy his own canvases in Flanders." What intrigued Smaldone about this quotation in regards to canvas is how Fontana's preference for Belgian linen was both very practical (he liked using the linen used by Verheyen) and totally impractical (he could have just bought his canvas in Milan).

In Underpin Nicholas John Jones and Andrew Smaldone present the specificity of surface as a major foundation of any considered painting, offering for consideration the lengths artists will go to prepare "just the right surface".

Consider Jones' words on the topic when he writes, "With my work, the very formal, and potentially cold process of beginning with a surface (rather than an idea), should in fact become human, poetic, and stirring as the work materializes." For Jones the surface is the point from which the work begins, forming the base of its personality, working from it until the painting takes on a presence that resonates and becomes more than simply liquid colour on a ground. He has developed a number of ways to make this notion more apparent in the work: sometimes using sections of primed canvas as rags in the painting process of other works, to later be stretched, offering a random composition to which to respond. A stretched canvas may only be partially primed leaving a difference in the way further layers take to the surface. Works in progress may be unstretched and re-stretched



at a different size and angle to fundamentally alter the work and provide a new starting point and direction. Jones continues to also work on stretchers prepared in the more standard way, selecting a variety of weights of linen and canvas, and priming with differing volumes of gesso then beginning with a consideration of the characteristics of that particular weave.

Andrew Smaldone's interests include space, light, architecture, depiction, message and time. To effectively communicate these, he takes particular notice of the "tooth" in his canvas in its preparation. A toothless canvas or one without a certain roughness is utterly useless for his purposes. The tooth as such is a crucial part of the tonal atmosphere he seeks to create with his thinly glazed layers of paint. Often the white tooth of the canvas showing through is very much part of that atmosphere and helps define the overall feeling of the work. It is precisely a matter of feeling between the artist and the canvas that enables Smaldone to find the correct balance between paint appearing to exist within the weave of the canvas and on top of that primed surface.

The painter's approach to the support on which they work is so fundamental that it is easily over looked - certainly if the artist is stretching canvas in the way that we think of as standard. Here you are encouraged to consider surface as the seed from which a painting grows, physically affecting the work; bringing out similarities and differences as regards the space each artist creates on the painted picture plane and the content that enhances it.

NICHOLAS JOHN JONES is an English artist, curator and cultural entrepreneur based between London and Oslo. Nicholas has travelled widely, living in Australia for two years and joining artist residencies in Italy, China, Japan and Switzerland. Having graduated from MFA Painting at the Slade School of Fine Art in 2011, he is Artistic Director at JKL Books, and Founding Director of PRAKSIS – a new international art centre for Norway.

ANDREW SMALDONE is an American artist, writer and educator based in Florence. Winner of the prestigious Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant for 2015, Andrew's new works explore both surface and space, a process he initiated in 2005 while completing a Masters in Fine Art at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design, London. He is Academic Dean at SRISA Firenze and helps the Zurich based architecture and art platform number_5 bring project ideas into physical form.

