

# LOWELL RYAN PROJECTS

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## Pick of the Week

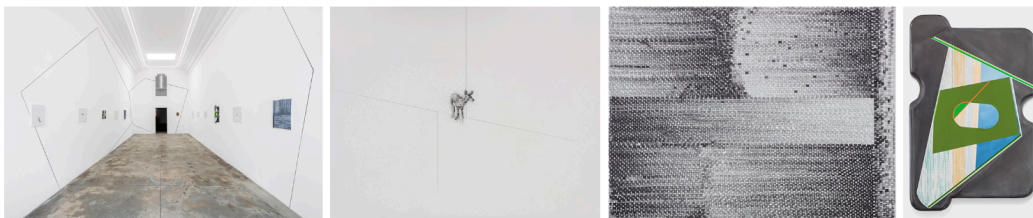
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by Jody Zellen

May 25, 2023

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**James Busby**  
***Suspirium***  
Lowell Ryan Projects  
May 6 - June 10, 2023



James Busby

James Busby is a South Carolina based artist whose Los Angeles debut is an intriguing mix of abstract and representational works. One of the most striking factors in the otherwise subtle installation of small scale works is how Busby extends the geometric lines from some of the pieces onto the walls to create a structure and container. The works alternate between abstract oils on canvas that consist of patterns of short brush strokes and contrast with representational but sketchy drawings in graphite on gessoed panels that reproduce trees and animals seen on the grounds of Busby's rural studio.

At first glance, the 11 x 14 inch *Double Tracked* (2023) appears to be a white on white minimal abstraction, but upon close viewing a beautifully drawn deer comes to life between two linear elements. Busby carefully renders the deer, reducing its size, taking it out of context by isolating it in a white field, yet illustrating it with tenderness as an artifact. *Birds of a Feather* (2023) similarly presents an exquisitely drawn fragment of a bird that is cropped by intersecting lines that divide the otherwise barren white ground. Numerous depictions of trees as seen in *Dreamsicle* and *Half my Mind* (both 2023) are presented at angles nested within hard-edged lines that distort any connection to real physical space or perspective.

Contrasting these minimal yet beautifully rendered elements from nature are pure abstractions such as *All the Go In-Betweens* (2023), *Trying to Catch a*

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*Deluge in a Paper Cup* (2022) and *Middle Distance Runner* (2023). To create these paintings, Busby dips his brush in paint, applying dabs to the canvas over and over again until the paint has run out. This creates a pattern of lighter and darker tones that extend across the composition and share a kinship with stitches or knitted designs. These works feel like fragments from a greater whole in a way that seems similar to Busby's drawings on panel. Seen from afar, these paintings have an internal structure and geometry that punctuates the sequence of images on the wall and relates to the lines painted within the gallery space.

The wall markings are hand painted dark lines that form irregular polygons on the wall extending from floor to ceiling. In some senses, the relationship between the lines and the paintings parallels the relationship between the graphite trees and animals and the lines Busby has inscribed within the individual panels.

The anomaly is a 2019 work titled *Detlef Schremph #2* a colorful geometric abstraction on hand-shaped wood that is a melange of painted lines and shapes centered within a dark grey background that has a Russian Constructivist sensibility, alludes to the shape and markings on a basketball court (Detlef Schremph was a German NBA player) and relates to Busby's earlier works.

The latin meaning of "suspirium" is "deep breath" and is a fitting title for Busby's installation that is both contemplative and aggressive simultaneously. Rooted in process, the works illustrate Busby's patience and interest in the meditative qualities of repetitive mark making as well as his interest in observing the world around him and transforming what he sees into refined illustrations. With a deep inhale, time stops and a moment of calm ensues. Busby's installation also gives viewers the opportunity to look close and reflect upon that which surrounds them.