

# ARTFORUM



View of “Condition Report: Deregulation,” 2014

NEW YORK

## Sean Micka

ABRONS ARTS CENTER

466 Grand Street

February 7–March 16

In this small show, titled “Condition Report:Deregulation,” Sean Micka’s dense, cerebral paintings depict complex changes in three landscapes: the Antarctic Ocean, the Amazon River Basin, and a Saudi Arabian desert. Micka

based his work on images from Landsat, a NASA spacecraft program that since 1972 has obtained millions of highly detailed satellite images of Earth. Launched just as government deregulation initiatives were gaining momentum, Landsat has historically alerted scientists to changes in natural resources, demographics, and landscapes through specific visualizations of landmasses. Micka has used the same information to create his own visualizations, translated through paint and nearly forty years of perspective.

Though the paintings in fact correspond to archival images from the 1970s and ’80s—which foreshadow breaking ice, rainforest destruction, and expanding deserts—they can also be read as abstractions: Each gives a representation of phenomenological effects beyond human sight. Micka’s color-coding imitates the false color of multispectral photography used by these satellites. But his palette of red, yellow, and blue calls close attention to the building blocks of color and painting. The parallelogram canvases mimic the shape of Landsat images, and, arranged in a row, they feed into and off one another in the gallery setting.

Each canvas is accompanied by a “condition report” on matching colored paper, detailing where and when the image was captured and five to six scientific conclusions drawn from it. These points each have three corresponding coordinates, which can be located on color-coded grids painted onto the adjacent walls; the colors can then be found in the painting. The grids, which explain how to look at the paintings, act much like a wall text; the reports, too, play at a kind of provenance or press material. Through such simulations, Micka’s tiny exhibition not only deals with environmental, political, and surveillance issues, but also suggests the ways that deciphering scientific data can be much like looking at art.

— Ali Pechman