

Press Release

Merlin Carpenter Warning Signs

27 March – 23 May 2026

Opening 26 March, 6 – 8 pm

1. Updating my painting.

In the early 2000s, my work had an element of “anti-painting,” a don’t care, semi-finished look. By the time of my POLICE show in 2013, I felt this had become rather decorative. Especially because some young artists were doing full-on painting by then, as a misunderstood version of anti-painting. So recently I tried to rework the POLICE style but go beyond its by-now-slightly decorative incidental marks. But this was not a return to traditional painting either, instead to something much more deadened, with the marks not functioning in the same way - as non-anti-painting or sign painting.

2. The 3D model.

I was also recently developing a proposal for an imaginary 3D model or diagram. This model was to be established in an artificial, contingent manner and used as an interpretation machine that could operate back and forward through time. Imagine a long Dieter Roth assemblage. Or a system of tightly interwoven open cubes which, if cut into cross sections, then become static 2D grids. Personal, professional, political, or theoretical concerns (and not just art-making) could be fed into the model, even in the near future or recent past, and it would process them. And from the “results”—in fact, inferences—strategies could be developed. In this model, things do not appear where they appear; different positions are just different distances within and through it. Totally OK when exaggerated proposals, or even bets, are the inputs. Like this exhibition, where the model is shown as three Hansel and Gretel house building blocks on wheels: past (Horse & Cart), present (Polite Warning), and future (Warning triangles), which will be moved around during the show. The show is not a working model, but a question to be put to one.

Everyone is acting strategic in the same way at the same time. In order to even nudge the needle, the cultural producer needs to show how average such a mass of aims is. In my Warning Signs poster, the use of the portrait photo and the inference of deep water are just like entry points into the 3D model. They are not literal warnings but rather deliberate interventions. Like ragged shitstorms that pop out in another time segment as Swarovski crystals, they become an outline of the smear, that can make a sign out of an average.

MC, Zurich 23/3/26