hold[s] a degree of symbolic force, not unlike the way the exhibition's title refers to love, and not unlike the way the works' brushstrokes refer to the painter and her palette, oils, and brushes." Despite their impenetrable shallowness, Cortright's paintings—we are told—reaffirm the good old values of meaning, love, and painting, albeit in a symbolically depleted, partially hollowed form, a forced compromise between banality and feeling, authenticity and emptiness.

"I have an interest in simplicity and beauty," Cortright said in an interview last year. "You don't need an essay to understand the work. I work in a contemporary way but I think the subject matter is easily accessible. If you like Monet you will like my work." It's surprising how frequently Cortright is compared to the Impressionist painter. The analogy works, not because her work is pretty or accessible, but more because Cortright, not unlike the Impressionists of the 1860s and '70s, belongs to a fashionable, antiacademic avant-garde representing new forms of sociability and a liberal, permissive attitude toward the spectacle of modernization. In his influential 1985 book, *The Painting of Modern Life*, art historian T.J. Clark discusses Monet's landscapes from the early 1870s, depicting the encroachment of leisure and boating on the river at Argenteuil in the northwest suburbs of Paris. "No doubt there was something abrupt and superficial about the boaters' encounter with the Bezons shore," he writes, "but speed and superficiality were not qualities necessarily to be despised in one's dealings with nature. Did not Monet's own painting, in the 1870s, experiment with ways to make such qualities part of its repertoire? Were not pictures required to be more casual and lighthearted now, less encumbered with grand forms and correct ideas?"

As Monet assimilated the threat of industry on the suburban landscape, Cortright's similarly "casual and lighthearted" paintings internalize the "speed and superficiality" of networked culture. To ask whether her work is critical or complacent—earnest or cynical—misses the point of her sugary compositions. "Perhaps it was true," Clark writes, "that Argenteuil was a factory, with nature produced as its best commodity, but Monet was seemingly prepared to accept the fact." So, I'm sure, would Cortright. Still, at the risk of sounding like an old-fashioned partisan of "correct ideas," I'm not entirely sold. **—Chloe Wyma**

HOUSTON

Oliver Herring

DiverseWorks // January 21–March 7

ANARCHY IS A term that sometimes appears in critical evaluations of Oliver Herring's performance-based work, but *polymorphous perversity* would be more apropos. Herring's *Areas for Action*—an extended run of durational and highly participatory performances arrayed around the open gallery at DiverseWorks—argues that pleasure is to be found across and around the human body. Whether institutional transgression (spitting colored liquid onto the walls of the gallery) or sensory experimentation (slathering up with baby oil, then cozying into a bed of silvery glitter), the artist's actions are a playful and queer balm to the scarred body of the outside world. See that stain on the wall? That paint-covered shirt stuck to the floor like a bad joke?

One can't help but marvel at the faintly humorous way the gallery is readied for Herring, the floor covered in a protective layer of plastic and brown craft paper. The setup is standard but seemingly infinite in its variations: Volunteers work with him to realize a particular day's performance (most of the works have been realized in a previous incarnation of *Areas for Action* or his ongoing TASK parties). During the six-hour shift, volunteers may be collaboratively active for only a small chunk, the rest of their time spent posing, reviewing, eating, waiting, chatting, etc. Nevertheless, their energy and willingness charges the room, and hopefully appears in the final documentation of their time together. Photographic evidence selected from hundreds of digital images of each day's shenanigans (if not always good, clean fun, then at least good fun) is printed to Herring's specifications by a bevy of assistants and volunteers. The photographs—pinned informally to the wall—serve as talismans of accomplishment, and perhaps a warning to anyone who wanders in from the street.

Over the course of Herring's 40-day residency, an archive accumulates around the gallery space, bespeaking a restless energy that defines Herring and his practice. Being present during a day's activities allows one to consider how the documentation of these performances is often snappier than the real-time events, quickly eliding all the downtime that goes into producing those perfect few images. Regardless, in this structure there's room to experience the many pleasures in performance.

—Andy Campbell

Oliver Herring Documentation of *Areas for Action, Houston (Day 7: Red, White, and Blue)*, 2015.

LYNN LANE, OLIVER HERRING, AND DIVERSEWORKS