



Victoria Gitman, *On Display*, 2004.
Photo: Anthony Cunha, Courtesy Daniel Weinberg Gallery

that way. In fact, even though the paintings are so realistic, the shapes of the purses taken together in the gallery abstract until they become geometric shapes against their backgrounds. So these hyper-detailed paintings of beaded purses have a kind of minimalism about them.

Gitman's previous paintings concentrated on how women are depicted and displayed in famous masterworks. This work is a reduction of that, focusing only on women's ornamentation from the recent past. It is a subtle, clever show and one that rewards patience and close investigation. But based on the reactions of male art patrons fleeing the gallery, *On Display* has little appeal to men. This is the art exhibition version of a "chick flick."

— Frank Rodriguez

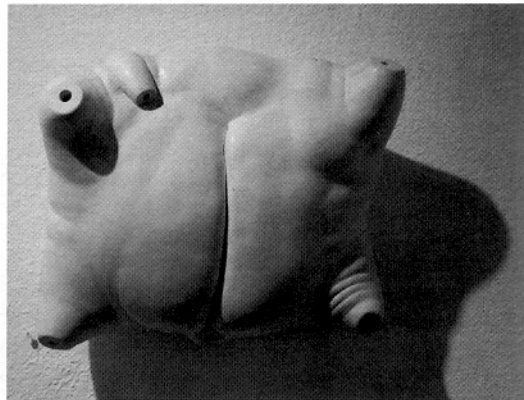
STEPHEN FLEMING Another Year in LA

AT FIRST GLANCE, Stephen Fleming's show "Acolyte of Entropy" at Another Year In LA gallery is warm and inviting but a closer look exposes haunting shapes that are based on body parts. Fleming brought his affected sculptures, installations and drawings from New Mexico, where he lives.

The main gallery holds eleven of Fleming's wall mounted sculptures. Each of these pieces share several qualities: about 14" x 12" x 12" in size, made from 25 pounds of clay, smooth in texture, loosely resembling a human heart and glazed with a monochrome creamy white matching the gallery walls. This "sameness" creates a soothing first impression, drawing you further into the gallery. Upon full disclosure you realize each sculpture is distinct from the next with anthropomorphous shapes that are

elongated, bent, plumped-up, folded, stacked, cut and cajoled. Chubby, spooky headless torsos with too many appendages creep out at you from the shadows. Some of the sculptures have phallic shapes that are precariously contained by a thin membrane: these in particular seem as though they want to be petted, caressed and released. Others are splayed out in full relief resembling an unnatural combination of front and back, showing rolls and crevices. Several of the torso-like shapes seem to be caught in intimate moments, side by side, as though we're watching them cuddle and spoon. Fleming refers to these sculptures as "lap pieces" because they were molded and conceived in his lap. There are no "faces, hands or feet," but one can't help but see them as lifelike.

Also in the main gallery are two shelf installations. Placed on each shelf or hanging directly above them are various sculptures, animal skins, blocks, seed pods, bones, stones, wire, pieces of petrified wood, jars filled with miniature sculptures and drawings of pudgy human forms behind dirty glass. These pieces provide the only color in this room with hues of rusty browns, deep blues, rich greens and



Stephen Fleming, *Untitled*, 2006, courtesy Another Year in LA

burnt reds. *Acolyte of Entropy*, also the title of the show, verges on being a self portrait; it deals with time and the depletion of energy. The shelf objects look as though they are from an archeological dig and are juxtaposed with the smoother, lifelike sculptures seemingly caught in a before or afterlife realm.

In the back room gallery are a group of smaller wall sculptures and mixed media drawings. The pieces shown here are further studies of human-like torsos using wax and pigment. While some of these images have been left in their current two-dimensional form, others have inspired sculptures found in the show.

Stephen Fleming exposes a world of weird human-like shapes that are both disconcerting and familiar, forcing one to reflect on our own flaws. But maybe because of the sculpture's smoothness, the charm of their lap-friendly size or the creamy color, you will want to take one of these little creatures home and love it, imperfections and all.

—Paige Wery

SHANE GUFFOGG Lawrence Asher Gallery

TOO OFTEN ABSTRACT PAINTING becomes a reenactment of the genre. What was once an art of exciting progressions and innovations has stalled and sputtered off and on since at least the '70s. Recent abstraction has sought to find a way out of this quagmire of quotation by drawing influence from popular culture and the new media of the digital era, from the anime influenced abstract-figuration of Inka Essenhigh to the cartoon explosions of Julie Mehretu or Matthew Ritchie. Others, such as Jeremy Blake, use digital media to update the modernist convention. Still, with all of the new tools at the disposal of painters, it remains deceptively difficult to add something unique and of substance to the story of abstract painting. Los Angeles based painter Shane Guffogg, using the most traditional means (oil on canvas, charcoal on paper), seems to have done just that.

This became clear during a recent show of 9 paintings and 4 drawings at the Lawrence Asher Gallery. Guffogg's work is clearly of the digital age without taking the easy route of aping digital technology. If one were in a Pop-Culture frame of mind, one might see something of the opening credits of *The Matrix* in the work, but this painter achieves more than a superficial reading would suggest. Like a conductor silently waving his arms in the air, Guffogg has orchestrated his layers of marks so that they shift in and out of focus, falling down across the surface in veils of pigment, waving like a translucent fabric sheet hung out to dry.

In certain paintings, the spatial contradictions that occur can create the illusion of movement while remaining absolutely still. Guffogg's work achieves this little miracle repeatedly. In paintings like *Mermer* (70 x 80 inches, oil on canvas) Guffogg starts with a complex gestural tangle of paint and, rather than simply repeating it, he mirrors the motif back to back over the original pattern, echoed in miniature, set into glazes of light and color that cascade down across the painting. The resulting image pulsates and breathes before the viewer.