



Damian Loeb, *Primary*, 2009, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York



Damian Loeb, *Better Ways*, 2011, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York



Damian Loeb, *Ghosts I-IV*, 2010, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York



Damian Loeb, *Welcome to Paradise*, 2011, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York



Acquavella Gallery TWO DEGREES OF DAMIAN LOEB by Charlie Finch

I was chatting with **Damian Loeb's** serene bride Zoya at Acquavella's lugubrious, tomblike space the other night (made darker by the lack of refreshments), when Damian snuck up behind me. "I'm going outside for a cigarette, Charlie," he announced, so I joined him on the sidewalk with his equally skinny childhood pal **Moby**.

"You know how many photos I take, Charlie," Loeb continued. "For months I followed Zoya around snapping her, hundreds of times every day." Apparently the distraction of brand new daughters, ages 3 and 1, was not enough action for Damian, much less poor Zoya. What resulted are almost black naked paintings of a voluptuous Zoya, all of which have sold, at price points in the low six figures apiece (except for one brand new painting in the office), probably to the very many short-haired, sharkskin-suited Russian collectors who attended the opening.

The exhibition has one perfect room, the front one, with three still lifes of bare Zoya bent like a pretzel, writhing like a snake, trying not too hard to make her husband, in the guise of **Ingres**, salivate. These works are called *Primary*, *Better Ways* and *Ghosts I-IV*. Let's hope they shall continue to hang together in Vladimir Putin's Kremlin lair. The back room is not so perfect, because of a jarring variation in palette and styles.

Here, the silhouette, *Welcome to Paradise*, highlights Zoya's nipple winningly. You've heard, in the bad old sexist vernacular, of "a breast man" or "a leg man?" Damian Loeb is a "nipple man," turning Zoya's nips into those juicy seeds that you suck out of a pomegranate. Her clitoris is not so successfully rendered in a full frontal piece called *The Sound of Music* and her hand flies around, with wedding band, in kitschy abandon in something called *Atmosphere*, as if Zoya is trying to make a shadow puppet of her curvy body.

The whole effect of the show, which gallery staff described as "the husband's gaze" (to which one married *Artnet Magazine* editor replied, waggishly, "Are there any televisions in the paintings?"), is slightly nauseating, yet peacefully erotic if you are friends, as I am, with the subject and the subject's current husband. One thing I do know: a bunch of Russkies will soon be getting some stiffies!

"Damian Loeb: Verschränkung and the Uncertainty Principle," May 6-June 17, 2011, at Acquavella Galleries, Inc., 18 East 79th Street, New York, N.Y., 10075.

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Damian Loeb, *The Sound Of Music*, 2010, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York



Damian Loeb, *Atmosphere*, 2010, Acquavella Galleries, Inc., New York