

## KANTOR / FEUER GALLERY

# Art in America

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Dana Frankfort: *Untitled (Yes)*, 2005, oil on linen, 60 by 72 inches; at Brooklyn Fireproof.

## Dana Frankfort at Brooklyn Fireproof

One of the most refreshing aspects of Dana Frankfort's debut exhibition was how clearly the paintings demonstrated her lack of interest in eccentricity of materials, exactitude of finish, imagery of any kind, bright nursery colors and self-conscious quirkiness of execution—to name a few options that have recently been overused by younger painters. Frankfort's work is made with hand-held brushes, from-the-tube colors and smallish, store-bought stretchers or largish homemade wood panels. Mostly what she does is paint a word or phrase and then repaint it until she is satisfied with the results. The texts and numerals Frankfort uses ("OK," "Yes," "For the love of God" or a phone number) tend to be verbal material that comes from the place in one's mind that is still busy producing language even when

nothing in particular is going on.

The basic sticks-and-curves architecture of numbers and the alphabet provides ample tools for composition. Frankfort's brusque, nonchalant methodology belies a careful, precise eye, revealed in how stray pieces of color left at the edges or stuck incongruously on the surface of a painting often turn out to be essential compositional elements. There is evidence of much underpainting and sanding, as well as sideways or upside-down drips, and contrasts between shiny and matte surfaces, dry and puddled passages of painting, often all within a single work. Frankfort has no set program; she seems most interested in visually pleasing herself. When interviewed at the gallery, Frankfort mentioned that she has a large number of supports going at any given time and feels free to change to a different word or phrase during the painting process.

The title of the exhibition, "What's So Funny?," could be a stock phrase that didn't make it into one of the paintings, but it also comes across as a challenge to the viewer, an assertion that Frankfort is serious about what she's doing. She is one of a new crop of young painters, which includes Cordy Ryman and Wallace Whitney, who intuit that their work can stand up to newer, currently fashionable mediums such as large-format color photography, as well as video and film installations, if it focuses on its own materiality and internal rules. After all, this is how the Impressionists faced the initial challenge of photography and the Cubists dealt with the movies.

After visiting Frankfort's show

for the first time, I saw Hou Hsiao-Hsien's *Millennium Mambo*, a Taiwanese film shot mostly inside of nightclubs. Somehow, the film made me think of Frankfort's *Untitled (Yes)*, a 60-by-72-inch painting that features the word "Yes" loosely brushed in an electric fuchsia across the foreground. Fragments of earlier allover gestures in purple, matte black and parrot green poked through the bright letters, which seemed to loom forward, enveloping the viewer in a dance of sultry hues. The rich, bleeding color of the artificial nighttime environments in *Millennium Mambo* seemed remarkably of a piece with Frankfort's work.

This show was a bracing lesson in what painting, left a little elemental and raw, can still achieve.

—Joe Fyfe

Joe Fyfe, 'What's So Funny', Art In America, February, 2006