

Painting beyond the stretcher at the deCordova

By GREG COOK | February 13, 2013



"Paint Things: Beyond the Stretcher" at the deCordova is a smart, sinewy examination of 18 artists who make "painting-as-sculpture and vice versa." Think giant ball of twine made out of 100 ripped-up, "store-bought" paintings. Think plasterboard wall peeled open and shaved down into minimalist geometric designs. Think ragged, broken wooden thing sandwiched between two violet fish tanks.

The founding mother of this bona fide hot trend is Jessica Stockholder, who's been at it since the 1980s. Her [JS 492] (2009) offers a green vase and lamp on a table at the corner of a green rug that has been rudely painted green and orange in spots. A shower curtain, yellow coveralls, yellow fur, a sheet of glass painted blue, and various green things are arrayed on the wall behind.

This type of formalist hoarding used to annoy the hell out of me. Am I getting soft, or sophisticated, when I find it tolerably curious now? Imagine it's a 3D painting with each object serving as a brushstroke. Stockholder carefully composes the apparent chaos by color: yellow, green, blue.

But mostly, the artists banally disassemble composition, color, and texture via mass-produced crap. It's fine-art abstraction at the intersection of assemblage and performance. It's cute retreads of 1960s, '70s, and '80s art producing diminishing returns.

These sculptures are cousins to "provisional painting" or "the new casual" that some say is about rejecting slick art commercialism and seeking surprises by doing everything "wrong." Evan Garza, who co-curated the show with Dina Deitsch, detects feminist and gay boundary breaking in "Paint Things." I sense connections between these seeming ruins and the feeling of living in a fractured society after 9/11, two wars, Hurricane Katrina, the Great Recession, and with the prospects of global warming. Maybe all of the above?

The 1992 video "Kiss My Royal Irish Ass" shows Cheryl Donegan dressed in green lingerie sitting in a puddle of emerald paint and making four-leaf clover prints by pressing her ass to paper. **Allison Schulnik's** 2009 psychedelic claymation music video depicts a yeti-clown sadly wandering a forest until getting beamed up by a crystal UFO. Kate Gilmore's 2013 video shows her, clad in a nice dress and heels, stomping a row of glass cylinders. They spill white paint down troughs into fishbowls (which are here in the gallery). Into the show's formal noodling, these three inject badly needed emotion — feral, angry, depressed, destructive, urgent.

Source: <http://http://thephoenix.com/boston/arts/151577-painting-beyond-the-stretcher-at-the-decordova/>