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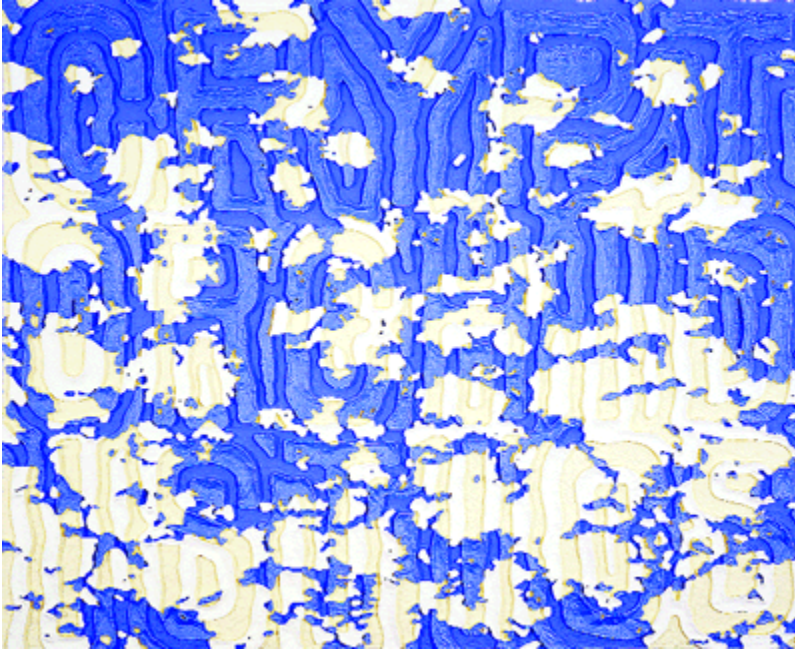


Photo Alan Zindman/ Courtesy Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, New York

Bruce Pearson's "State of non-descent," acrylic and oil on styrofoam. 2004, suggests the corny seepage of Surrealism into the visual mainstream.

Glistening Slabs

Great paintings resonant with history articulate complexities of today

By CARRIE MOYER

In his current solo show at Ronald Feldman Fine Arts, Bruce Pearson continues his ongoing project of making the unbearable simultaneity of being gorgeously manifest.

Glistening slabs of painting, carved from thick styrofoam and meticulously covered with acrylic and oil paints, combine and recombine ideas from closed sets of interlocking themes, each work becoming a kind of Venn Diagram for Pearson's thinking.

Consciousness, phenomenology, language, history, and art history all manage to work themselves into the crevices of these paintings.

With an ear toward the poetic and the random, Pearson culls language from mass media and uses it as a starting point for his complex works. These fragments of "found" punditry and journalistic babble function as both the ground for each painting as well as its title. Subsequent layers of imagery, carving, and paint further camouflage the text. Subtle chromatic shifts reiterate the three-dimensional aspects of the surface while overt highlights play up the staginess of Pearson's constructs.

To create the unique subset of strategies that each individual painting represents, Pearson joins various classifications of text, imagery, composition, and palette. Mandala-like compositions meld with psychedelic color and digitally manipulated photos to create

works such as “An effective low-cost solution for combating mind control.” Looking like CAT-scans thrown into a centrifuge, these paintings link consciousness with technology.

In “Encyclopedia 3 (relative calm sounds of gunfire and footsteps sadly familiar sheds some light),” pictures from an 18th century encyclopedia explode into a meditation on 20th century abstraction. Miro, Matisse, Arp, and Stuart Davis are conjured up through an amazing array of biomorphic forms and the palette of 1950s interior design.

The conventions of Modernist composition are reiterated in works such as “Maybe evolutions going in reverse,” where the attenuated outlines of paint spills and pours glow like pumped-up Cheeze Doodles in a deep, lush space. In “State of non-descent,” chewed-up, popcorn-shaped clouds puncture a blue ground, suggesting the corny seepage of Surrealism into the visual mainstream. Because this painting lacks the glossy reflections of many of the other works, the crusty, manhandled surface becomes evident, making Pearson’s labor-intensive process appear even more obsessive.

Through a crackerjack combination of intellect and bodily experience, Bruce Pearson offers the viewer a brilliant solution to the mind-body problem. He reminds us once again that great painting is up to the task of articulating the complexities of being alive and awake at this moment in time. Be here now.