

Bruce Hainley, Review, Artforum, May 2002, p. 187

LECIA DOLE-RECIO / RICHARD TELLES FINE ART

It's been a rough week. In rapid succession I saw a painting of Nicole Kidman as Salomé carrying the severed head of Tom Cruise; read a review of a show in which the writer, not satisfied with the phrase "jaw-dropping facility and prickly verve," went on to invoke "Manet, Chardin, Caravaggio and Zurbaran, as well as . . . Gerhard Richter, John Currin [sic] and Kurt Kauper" for still lifes and portraits that are so stupefyingly incompetent that I can't even feel pity for the painter; and had a tony gallerist alert me to the fact that the intriguing recent Cubist-inspired canvas I was standing before had nothing to do with Cubism because, "you know, Cubism's been done."

The antithesis of the preceding was Lecia Dole-Recio's work, a reprieve from the gimmicky apologies for painting that pass for paintings these days. Part of her project is a downshift in the acceleration of vision. Experiments on the margins of painting, drawing, and collage, using microsculptural construction with paper cutouts (imagine a collaboration between Morton Feldman and Gordon Matta-Clark) to explore picture plane and surface, Dole Recio's subtle, quiet paintings accomplish the necessary braking by nuanced shifts in color (beige, cream, tan; black, gray, white) and materials (transparent, translucent, opaque) as well as representational gaming (a shadow from a cardboard cutout, a graphite or painted representation of a shadow).

Among these modulations the artist's meditation is on the consequences -literal and metaphoric, erotically inflected of sameness and difference.

In Untitled (all works 2001) a smallish piece of cardboard has been painted a foggy gray. Rhomboids have been cut out of it and most of the holes refitted with the excised pieces but not quite cleanly. At times one can see through the gaps to the wall or to the glimmer of a transparent tape backing; elsewhere the crevices reveal only darkness. On the cardboard's surface Dole-Recio has painted circles, sometimes rounds within squares, in various shaded gradations and then covered them with various doudy stripes -frost, periwinkle, slate- leaving only the ghostliest residue of the circles. What's striking is the seeming casualness, the almost trashed quality, of the unerring construction (it looks like it could fall apart but, spookily, it is the appearance of the holes and shadows that fastens it together).

The thing is a painting, but a painting that has taken. seemingly without effort, many of the constituent limits, histories, and theories of painting apart: Combining cardboard, paper, and tape but not canvas, it is a "shaped" form (slightly askew. a dinged rectangle) in which Michael Fried's vaunted absorption has become a material affect of cardboard soaking up the wetness of the paint.

When Dole-Recio covers larger expanses, as she does in the majority of the works in this spare show, the folds and harlequin patternings of the paper, the intricacies of the layered cutouts and gradations become almost topographical while resisting any suggestion, thank God, of "mapping". She is content to allow the abstract to remain nonrepresentational.

Untitled, in paint, vellum, tape, and paper, accomplishes this material and metaphoric syncopation in a hypnotic sweep in which surface becomes structure and support only to end as representation of both: Through paint and cutout and the microlayering of papers, what begins as an actual ground shifts to become a representation of that ground presented on another surface.

If I have a reservation about this important debut, it is that given the quantity and quality of looking that Dole-Recio's paintings demand, she could have pared down her show even more. An eye requires time and space to look for and at something -especially when that something is configured in a magical, evaporating palette of tan and gray mixed with quartz, rose, and amethyst.

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