

jan/feb 2009  
vol 3 issue 3

- in this issue
- featured articles
- quick looks
- photo gallery
- mini reviews
- calendar

**Events:**  
Inauguration Subversion:  
readings at Stories Books

**Blogs:**



**Other Artillery Sites:**  
MySpace  
FaceBook

## Rapid Fire Reviews

### LOS ANGELES

#### Gary Simmons at Margo Leavin Gallery

Gary Simmons infiltrates the national narrative with "Smoke," an exhibition of burning buildings rendered in pigments and oils that materialize the otherwise ghostly presence of his early hand-smear chalk drawings, also monochromatic and monumental. The scene unfolding in what might be a New York City skyscraper or a low Los Angeles apartment complex imparts an urgent immediacy. "Smoke" takes architecture as social metaphor but exposes the trap of such a structural analysis. The buildings, seen below from a street view, are more personal, narrative and traumatic. They gesture toward the enormous loss — of safety, security, possessions, community, independence — suffered in whole or part by the African-American community over time. Accompanying volatized text works like "By Tomorrow It Will Be Too Late" and "When We Hate You, We're Happy — The Dark Side of Survival" suggest the root cause of these fires is nothing as disorganized or organic as a riot, or as singularly preconceived as arson; it's a spark. Here smoke from the metaphorical building, a powder keg that emanates blackness, will soon envelop the city. The mood of the nation pre-election seems to rise upward on Simmons' chalkboard-black canvases into an expansive sky. Derrida would have appreciated this portrait of hope under erasure. What I found striking was the extent to which each of the artists took the concept of craft seriously. Not because they do needlepoint — "fossilizing practices," as the curator refers to them — but more significantly, because their attention to it files in the face of current art practice. Today, technique is often sublimated to concept, so much so that it can be a detriment to communicating the very ideas an artist wants to highlight. With traditional craft shows, often the opposite happens — artistic technique drives the focus rather than cultural commentary. This exhibition impressively balanced both.

—Carrie Paterson

#### Multiverse at Claremont Museum of Art

"Multiverse" at Claremont Museum of Art is rife with humor and homespun social histories, from Jedediah Caesar's resin blocks cut into analytical cross sections to reveal the detritus of his studio-verse, to Kerry Tribe's low-tech ambient effects film made with the "Lumia Ori" (circa 1980), which simulates the Northern Lights and was a fixture in her parents' fireplace. Other works in the show suggest the Multiverse has political dimensions: Nancy Macko's video Bee Stories is a kaleidoscopic wormhole into the matriarchal culture of hive structures and human languages, suggesting the importance of communication as a tool for re-making the world. Emre Hüner's captivating animation Panoptikon is complex, rich, and dense with impossibilities; true to its Foucaultian title, the apocalyptic multi-narrative suggests the singular prison of the imagination — one that has no boundaries, only vision. Art is a universe unto itself — deliciously expansive — as shown by Fred Tomaselli's deep photograms and Sebastiaan Bremer's pointillist fractal over-paintings on cosmic colored C-prints. In a flip-book sculpture that stops time itself, Miller Lagos has taken copies of Albrecht Dürer's etching of The woman clothed with the sun, and the seven-headed dragon from The Book of Revelations and carved the stacked paper into a stump. The end, you see, is the beginning.

—Carrie Paterson



Steve Huston, *Study for Picking it Up*, 2008, courtesy Yarger/Strauss Contemporary

#### Steve Huston at Yarger/Strauss Contemporary

Steve Huston is a master of the male form. Clothed or unclothed, you can see and feel muscles coiled and rippling, tensed up while performing a task like lifting a box or pulling on a rope. It's not about desire or sensuality, instead, it's very macho in tone and scientific in its physiological detail (in the visceral Draw Down, the figure's skin seems barely there and we are confronted with the angry red muscles underneath). Huston's workers are heroic and in these new large scale paintings, they take on epic proportions. Adding to the drama are backgrounds of landscapes and clouds that have a bit of Maxfield Parrish romanticism and lighting to them. Maybe the painter's recent time away from LA in Montana has brought nature into his traditional working class subject matter. But while fellow LA artist John Sonsini paints heroic portraits of Latin workmen, Huston's paintings are not about individuals, they celebrate the everyman laborer. The only hang-up with these accomplished works is that the setups can seem somewhat posed and academic, not spontaneous.

Huston's boxing paintings are completely the opposite. Here, the power suggested in the workmen paintings is violently unleashed and the results are impressive. Fight, Composition in Red and Gold is a knockout of motion and power rendered with busy brush strokes that portray golden light dancing off of the sweaty pugilist's bodies. More than George Bellows, Huston's boxing paintings remind me of Robert Riggs, one of the greatest painters of realism in the '30s and '40s, but Huston's painterly surfaces, bold colors and huge canvases make his work unique.

—Frank Rodriguez

### NEW YORK



#### Cory Arcangel at Team Gallery

Best known as a hacker/artist for his coy and somewhat sarcastic works that take apart fragments of our media saturated world, then put back together. Arcangel uses the Internet, sound, performance and video, making works that always appear low tech, but often in actuality are dependent on complicated programming.

For his exhibition "Adult Contemporary" at Team, he continues his investigation into obsolete formats, exploring the relationship between digital and analogue media. For Personal Film and Video Painting, he uses