

ART QUIPS

A NEW GENERATION OF UNCOMMON PERSPECTIVES

Cordy Ryman at DCKT Contemporary

By Jill Conner
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"The first log he chooses lies at the top of a small knoll, in a patch of firecracker weed. He heads toward it; the little red flowers with sulphur-yellow tips seem to part to make way for him and the cable. He throws the bell around the end of the log that is lifted free of the earth where the knoll drops sharply toward the canyon, then secures it in its hook."

- Ken Kesey, *Sometimes a Great Notion*, 1963

Cordy Ryman's selection of new work at DCKT Contemporary breaks down the painted plane and extends the notion of painting from its traditional, flat surface toward an array of tiny modules that are either stacked or collaged together, while bearing different textures. Similar to the complex structure of Kesey's narrative, Ryman revives the genre of abstraction as a way of life, accessible beyond the confines of the Ivory Tower suggesting an innocence and freedom within creativity.

Unlike Postwar American abstract art that was placed high on a pedestal for its independence of form, Ryman captures tactile, but not transcendental, beauty. "Third Wave," (2008) features an array of long boards that are set at different angles along the gallery wall, creating both a physical and visual wave of color. Painted in three different pastel colors on the front while fire-engine red coats the back, this work connects physical movement with a larger abstract idea.



A more poignant piece

titled, "Pink Staple 2,"

(2008) combines a set of drastically different surfaces that alternate a coat of bright red with areas of natural wood, exposed after the paint had been removed by hand it seems. A series of wood staples shamelessly connects both sides of the center, bringing the mechanics of art making into view.

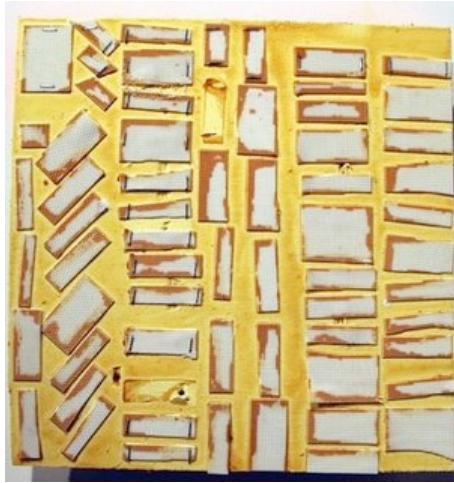


One piece that stands out as a metaphor for the circuitry of American art history is "Coil 2." (2008) In this instance the artist pieced together cut boards on their sides, to create shallow recesses that appear similar to a maze. But in this piece, not a single path connects with the other leading the viewer into an aesthetic dead end.



While the notion of quality has been vanquished from contemporary art, Ryman uses this new freedom to stretch abstract paint into an object that contains scraps from his studio. "V3," (2008) for example

contains an array of velcro swatches attached to a pale, yellow surface whereas, "Red Frosting," (2008) appears to bear a smattering of wood dust collected from the studio floor.



American abstraction is far from a finished idea. While it continues to move away from particular forms, such as the figurative, the genre has begun to focus not so much on the visual effect of the finished product but, instead, the process and the materials that go into it. As meaning becomes both something and nothing simultaneously, Ryman cuts through layers of historic formalism and transforms the abstract art process into a performative, random act.