

Art in America

MAY 2003

Dennis Hollingsworth at Nicole Klagsbrun

Dennis Hollingsworth's mission is to find ways to produce abstract paintings without using a brush. In doing so, the artist gets rid of the brushstroke and its intimations of gesture, authorship and good taste. His easel paintings consist of raw paint placed on top of a two-dimensional support; Hollingsworth seems intent on exploring forms and colors while avoiding all hints of figuration. He is determined to deny painting's ability to create the illusion of space beyond the surface. Instead, he builds up his intricate paintings outwardly from the picture plane toward us.

Hollingsworth's pictures are tough—he breaks almost every rule in the book. In *Carnitas* (24 1/2 by 30 1/2 inches, 2002), he slaps thick, meaty, formless slabs of black, light gray and dark gray paint one on top of the other, within an oval of blue squeezed directly from the tube onto the exposed light-brown canvas. The slabs are activated by touches of dark pink, white, pale blue, gray, tan and light and dark green

appearing in various guises, such as thick oval dabs or spiky balls of paint that look like chestnut shells. The resulting combination of colors and viscous textures is unsettling. This picture brings postwar European *peinture informel* to mind, as if Wols, Fautrier and Mathieu were simultaneously referenced.

Earthy Delights (48 by 54 inches, 2002) is a far more lyrical work due to both its range of hues and its less thunderous orchestration of forms. Pale green is applied over gray that is applied over dark pink—the light brown margins of the canvas remain exposed on the right and left. Next, Hollingsworth scrapes away the top two layers in select areas, allowing the pink to burst forth. Then he creates three horizontal zones of spilled white paint and affixes many small spiky balls of white, black, dark green and pink paint to the preceding layers of pigment. The composition he thereby obtains is dazzling.

In the oil-on-board works included in the exhibition, Hollingsworth presses and scrapes paint to striking effect. Richter-like virtuosity and insouciance are evoked; one is aptly named *Dare Devil* (20 by 18 inches, 2002). This artist achieves an idiosyncratic range of pictorial effects as he focuses upon both the malleability and the intensity of hue inherent to the medium.

—Michael Amy

Dennis Hollingsworth: *Carnitas*, 2002, oil on linen over wood panel, 24 1/2 by 30 1/2 inches; at Nicole Klagsbrun. (Review on p. 139.)

