



Bringing the Viscera Out of Oils

FLESH AND PAINT

DENNIS HOLLINGSWORTH

Nicole Klagsbrun Gallery
526 West 26th Street
Through April 28

“Corporate shit,” I thought, stepping through the door. At first, Dennis Hollingsworth’s slathered oils look like the garish, peppy, mindless lobby decorations of a trendy ad agency. Even after you are drawn in by the oddball burrs of paint jutting an inch from the linen, the surface loopiness may well lead you to (rightly) suspect that you are looking at the work of a California artist. But once those burrs have hooked you, raw, weighty beauty manifests itself. De Kooning saw flesh as the reason for oil painting; Hollingsworth flays, cuts, scrapes, and spurts his images. These paintings bring out the viscera of oil paint, exposing why it is still, as we drown in a sea of lo-res downloads, so powerful a medium.

A painting such as *The Shades IV* subverts expectations: Are the colorful endomorphs that wallow in this dark world tormented souls out of Dante, or does the title refer to the perfect rectangle of squeegeed black that, like a drawn window shade, blocks all but slivers of sunlight? Sliced discs of paint, pancake-stacked one atop the other, radiate the humorous, squashed energy of Wile E. Coyote after the anvil has been lifted. Several paintings use curtains of alizarin crimson that could evoke hell as seen through a shroud of petrochemicals (the artist does, after all, live in L.A.).

Elsewhere, Hollingsworth pulls off unlikely color harmonies: In *Logos*, bile green and bruised purple set off dive-bombing crimson wedges that have been literally hacked from a white field. And yet his daunting technical virtuosity never suffocates his atmospheric compositions or gets in the way of the profound whimsy of his content. Jaded first impressions aside, this is dystopia as fun house. —R.C. Baker