

# SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

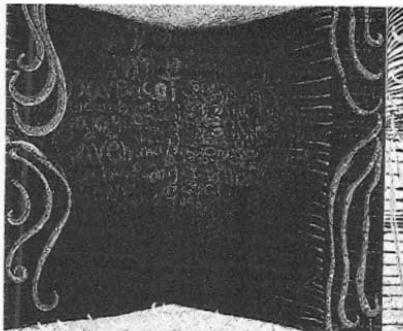
Art in America  
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## Suzanne McClelland at Paul Kasmin

Suzanne McClelland has worked for over 10 years with a simple concept: words as motifs for abstract paintings. Within that constraint she lets her imagination go wild, stretching, squeezing and distorting letters almost beyond recognition, placing words backward, upside down or in spirals. Her style has tended toward the expressionistic—fitful and scratchy.

However, in this recent show of three large and four smaller works, aptly titled "out of character," two 14-foot-wide paintings, *Cynthia and Angela* and *Frankie and Tallulah*, seem atypically controlled and orderly. The artist structures these works with perspectival planes that can be seen as either the corner of a room or an open book. According to a gallery leaflet, the words she uses in these paintings have been selected from conversations taped in her studio between mother and daughter pairs.

On the left side of *Frankie and Tallulah* (2000), two black planes lined like notebook paper and filled with writing recede from the viewer. Phrases such as "I don't want you" or "who don't you like" roil in McClelland's expressive



Suzanne McClelland: *Frankie and Tallulah*, 2000, absacrylic on canvas, 75 by 168 1/2 inches; at Paul Kasmin.

hand. On the right, white planes with black stripes come toward the viewer, suggesting the cover of a splayed book. Striking red letters spell out sentiments about youth: "everything is young is cute," "everything when it is young when it's fresh." Where one phrase ends and the next begins is the viewer's call.

In *Cynthia and Angela* (2000), against a muted blue-gray background, two illusionistic walls move away from the viewer forming a large V shape. They meet at the painting's center, where, instead of a vanishing point, there is a narrow, vertical, pale yellow rectangle. Between these walls, two sets of shorter walls are spawned by the central rectangle. The word "enough" in capital letters fills the left side from floor to ceiling, appearing on all three planes, as if each were transparent. On the right, the same word is written in mirror image. The doubling and recession of "enough" gives it the presence of a scream reverberating through a hallway. Flowery rivulets of acrylic medium and touches of bright color punctuate the canvas randomly. Upon closer inspection, some of these markings turn out to be writing: "I came to you," "I'm paying for it," "leave my baby alone." The phrases are again

infused with the charged context of the mother/daughter relationship.

Both Gertrude Stein's word portraits and Florine Stettheimer's paintings of interiors are cited in press information as McClelland's inspiration for this exhibition (two small paintings are named after these women). Like Stein, McClelland uses unorthodox approaches to language to create a physical and emotional experience.

—Cathy Lebowitz

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