

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

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Found in Translation by David Pagel

People often talk about things getting lost in translation when they describe some of the differences between books and movies, poetry and prose, or an original story and its updated version. The upshot of these conversations is that some intangible yet essential element has disappeared, and that viewers or readers are left with faint echoes of whatever magic had attracted them in the first place.

Rather than bemoaning such occurrences – or believing that modern life is intrinsically diminished by this secondhand quality – Suzanne McClelland paints potent pictures of what is gained in translation. At L.A. Lover Gallery, a sharply focused group of canvases, drawings, collages and silkscreens physically demonstrates that breakdowns in communication can be as loaded with significance as any crystal-clear message.

Layers make up all of McClelland's densely packed images from the past five years. The earliest and largest works are two loosely gestural collages pasted on pages of newspapers.

Resembling piecemeal murals painted by someone unable to remember what they did yesterday, these fragmented images embody a type of fitful energy that looks like the visual equivalent of stuttering. Their smudged and smeared compositions form the ground on which the rest of McClelland's art is layered.

A 7 by 9 foot lithography overlaid with dozens of silk-screened prints gives more refined shape to the inarticulate forces at work in the artist's repertoire. Four small drawings present a more intimate view of the gaps that sneak between intentions and statements, putting some slippery space between words and the world.

Aspects of each of these media commingle in the New York – based painter's show – stealing canvases. Deceptively simple, their vigorously worked surfaces still look ethereal and unfinished, as if the hastily scrawled letters and gestures that completely cover them could be blown away by a strong breeze.

Although McClelland's paintings are made up of gritting, physical layers, they never invite viewers to dig beneath their surfaces in archeological searches for deep meaning. Sharing more with fleeting sounds than static objects, these deft images get in your head and echo there, long after you've stopped looking at them.

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