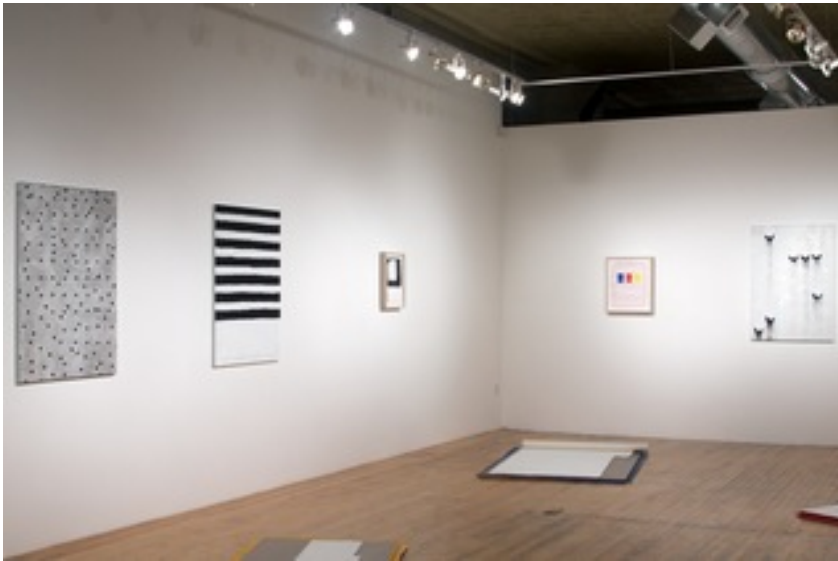


# SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

ArtSlant  
November 2010

## Artists in Analog by Dan Gunn



### Group Show

Alex Olson,  
Lisa  
Williamson  
Shane  
Campbell  
Gallery  
673 North  
Milwaukee  
Avenue,  
Chicago, IL  
60642  
November 14,  
2009 - January  
9, 2010

In Alex Olson's and Lisa Williamson's first show at Shane Campbell Gallery they find in each other an interesting analog. Alex Olson's paintings reference different forms of written text like announcements, editorials, or shorthand writing. Their pictorial flatness emphasizes their texture over an optic space and nods to the paintings' source material. However, these references appear to be really just a way to organize shapes on a two-dimensional surface, to give it a reason to be one way and not another.

Ms. Olson's works register two maybe three layers of paint at most. A majority of the paintings are built upon a textured patchwork of opposing white brush marks. By dragging a matte black paint atop the glossy white in strokes crossing the surface Ms. Olson further emphasizes a texture not unlike making a rubbing with charcoal.

This is seen in the painting *Articulation* where the dark matte black seems to fall from v-shaped marks, as if it were charcoal dust accumulating on the raised brushstrokes below. Ms. Olson also uses this matte black stroke to ring several of his canvases in a thin dark strip. The effect of this faux-shadow is to further flatten his canvases making them appear to be wafer thin and almost floating off of the wall.

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Installation view of Alex Olson and Lisa Williamson at Shane Campbell Gallery, Chicago.  
Image courtesy the gallery.

Similarly Lisa Williamson's framed paper pieces also name recognizable sources, like her paper relief *The Unswept Floor is Here Shown at an Angle* or *Faulty Window with an Awkward Shade*. In *Faulty Window*, a broken rectangular white shape floats in a black surround above accordion folds in the paper. Another paper work like *This Mouth* is simply a painted maroon sheet of paper lightly folded at the bottom. Beneath the fold a brilliant red color peeks out. With the title in mind the work does resemble a wide-open mouth. With Ms. Williamson's references it's hard to tell which comes first. Either the work proceeds from an extended formal investigation of a source or the title represents an attribution of a recognizable form onto an otherwise abstract work.

Ms. Williamson's series *Low and Horizontal* pushes this tension into a comment on design. In three separate floor pieces cut canvas lays atop on large veneered panels of wood. The polished but slightly cheap looking walnut stained panels are each ringed by fashionably tinted versions of the primary colors in what must be a superficial Bauhaus reference. Together, the elements of the work form references given via titles: *Low and Horizontal, Floor Plan, Low and Horizontal, Roll* and *Low and Horizontal, Bed*.

Ms. Olson's and Ms. Williamson's practices land in a familiar territory between "abstraction" and "representation", but this designation fails to be descriptive or useful. Instead the work begins to talk about a priori vs. tacit knowledge. This is the difference between planning something out or

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making it up as you go along and responding to what you learn. These two modes of thought and action cannot be neatly separated and it is the balance between the designed and “found out” in these works that makes them difficult to quantify and thus inviting to look at.

--Dan Gunn

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