

WHITNEY CLAFLIN
Nothing to Blame But Gemini
Saturday April 17th – Sunday May 16th 2010
Opening Reception Saturday April 17th 2010 7-10 PM

PRESS RELEASE

Mirroring each others' tastes, Whitney Claflin's paintings and posters hang side-by-side. Their complimentary dialogue echoes the complex come-and-go of materials on their surfaces, and the decorator's sense behind their composition. With an agility and why-not experimentation, these abstractions pair processes of back-and-forth, piling up and emptying out.

The paintings are grounds for trial and error. Lines seem distracted or of multiple minds, strokes wander off or are scribbled out. Surrealist bee trails come to mind, in the frequent stopping-short and turning around. The paintings take shape by their own devices, their elements building relationships according to their particular properties. Transferred marks are synesthetically tied to the objects used to convey them—the crackle of a plastic bag or listlessness of a string comes through. But these poetic, metaphorical moves are quickly tossed aside by a tacking-on of those very materials to the surface. In this way, a spectrum of presence is mapped out. Within the paintings, signs of impulsive decisions (to staple another canvas onto the painting, or fold a shape of tissue paper onto itself) are complicated by more distanced processes of transfers and faded traces. Additive and subtractive marks are traded, confused, folded over, and brushed away. So the artist's cognitive remove is balanced with immediate, textural gratifications.

In the posters, all layers of activity are flattened, and the leveling out of decisions effected by the paintings is effortlessly realized. The image recedes into the paper, unaware of process or shifting neuroses. The posters begin as snapshots of ambiguous gestures or ersatz patterns that Claflin has then manipulated digitally, further abstracting the original images from any possible references. Glimpses of the concrete, public world may peek through their drags, swipes, and glares (an imagined waxed windshield, or the iridescence of oil on asphalt), but any association is up to the viewer.

Perhaps a sidewalk sensibility is shared between the posters and the paintings. Their surfaces show traces of being stepped on, worked over, and wiped down. Discarded materials—newspaper, plastic bags, sand, and string—confer a gritty sense of debris to the work. Their elements are recyclable and up for grabs. As sites for grappling with abstract possibilities, these are playgrounds for grammatical and painterly choices.

~Annie Ochmanek