

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

The disarming, Honey-I-Shrunk-the-MoMA scale of Whitney Claflin's scrappy art invites interpretation: is it a tiny parody of the heroic bombast of large NYC abstract painting, or to engage more recent history, an insistent avowal of the snail-mail ethics of DIY bedroom manufacture?

Claflin's paintings are sized like personal objects, and bear traces of a bold and nervous hand. Their surfaces veer from accidental, even junky, to deliberate and practiced, often within a few inches. Their serial smallness, spectral invocation of bigness, and jagged, process-y exhibitionism leads away from parody or private homage and towards a tactile sense of broadening. They are swatches/samples/examples of scratchy experimentation, where pigment, canvas, staples, paper, dye, and sticky oil take a rather violent stab at sensibility. The all-over compositions imply the possibility of extension: they suggest patterns that do not tessellate in grids, but instead structure treatments that could take on other dimensions—if they ever felt like it.

The other 50% of the show is framed posters. In these, Claflin performs the ritual in reverse, photographing and cropping her compositions from larger fields of abstract, art-ish patterning. Taking from generic décor whose referent is painterly abstraction, and then returning it to the form of décor (a reproducible poster) in the presence of painterly abstraction, Claflin creates an uncanny mirroring. The narrow space between single and multiple, suggested in the paintings, becomes tighter in the presence of the posters. These two bodies of work, seen at once, present the viewer with an equation in which neither side is determinate and the only fixed point is their material equivalence.

~Greg Parma Smith