

in its casualness the painting, like many of the others, unexpectedly offers a realm of possibility as suggestive as it is spare.

—James Yood

## Molly Zuckerman-Hartung

JULIUS CAESAR

At the bottom of the checklist for Molly Zuckerman-Hartung's exhibition at Julius Caesar was a Shakespeare (mis)quote: "Macbeth: If we should fail? Lady Macbeth: We fail. But screw your courage to the sticking point and we shall not fail." This might be a motto or abridged artist statement for Zuckerman-Hartung, who has gathered up her courage and screwed it to the continued project of rethinking abstraction.

The artist seems to imagine abstraction as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari do, as an infinite field of potentials; contrary to any conception of abstraction as an endgame of absences and negations, her work affirms a hysterical, endless rallying of imaginative combinations and assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari's "immanentist" and "experimental" means of expanding abstraction in philosophy are the same principles shaping Zuckerman-Hartung's painting practice. While prodigiousness in abstraction is not an uncommon aim of contemporary painters or cultural aggregators, Zuckerman-Hartung's work is noteworthy in that it is based on carefully considered principles, not just attitude or cool disinterest. As a result, her engagement with the medium's mercurial language is anxiously and seriously dialectical.

*Sternutatory*, 2008, titled after the agent that causes sneezing, was sheepishly hung at the entrance so that the gallery door, when open, concealed it. A washy landscape broken up by three impasto diagonals, the composition is inelegantly proportioned. But by cultivating a secret theater behind the door and assigning it a surreptitious title, Zuckerman-Hartung extended what might otherwise be merely an ironical postmodern painting, made with two incongruent mark-making systems, into a Deleuze-Guattarian "and . . . and . . . and . . ." conjunction. That the artist exhibited her mother's mosaic *Pozzuoli*, 2007, alongside her own paintings had the same mixing-it-up effect. The mosaic, its tesserae arranged in a loose pattern of primary and neutral colors, embodies an abstract logic distinct from that of the exhibition as a whole. The lurid blue that Zuckerman-Hartung painted the floor also worked in this way, as a bold external interference with her expressive oil and acrylic works apportioned throughout the gallery.

*Meanwhile, x cannot know what x is, even though x be ever so well aware of what x is not*, 2008, is a melodramatic and nearly overworked abstract painting, a central rectangle of which the artist has cut, rotated, and reinserted—a dispassionate recomposing of an impassioned little abstraction. Channeling tactics of Lucio Fontana and Photoshop, the artist improves an aggressively scumbled composition by upending its center and giving it a hard-edged figure-ground relationship. Yet in cutting a rectangular core from a stirring gestural painting, she also condemns the work's modern ontology and its all-over field of expressive marks.

In the assemblage *Over the sea, that I loved as though it were to cleanse me of a stain*, 2008, a geometric painting utilizing a primary color scheme abuts a found metal-framed photo-

graph of a tropical beach. Dangling over the photograph are two necklaces, one strung with seashells and the other with blue plastic beads. The painting seems plastic and lifeless, reducing color, geometry, and composition to mere signifiers. Functioning as an exercise in semiotics, the assemblage evokes appropriation strategies and representational critique instead of passionate abstract painting. But it is when Zuckerman-Hartung summons the courage to fold both formal and dialectical explorations into her painting that she bestows feverish largesse on the rhetoric of abstraction.

—Michelle Grabner

## SAN FRANCISCO

### Tammy Rae Carland

SILVERMAN GALLERY

On view in Tammy Rae Carland's recent exhibition were twelve color photographs of aging objects—a coffee mug, knitted pot holders, faded Valentine's Day candy boxes, and the like. These things appear to be digitally excised from their original context, to be arranged on a white background like pinned butterflies. They have the crisp, uninflected look of objects imaged on a scanner. Some of the works depict single objects, while the key ones portray numerous items that together suggest narratives. The tone is cool, which counters the forlornness of these items, yet the pictures, when surrounding the viewer, also impart the strange simultaneous comfort and anxiety afforded by things.

This view of objects as psychologically charged is affirmed by the show's title, "An Archive of Feelings," which conjures a mixture of order and unruliness and is, the press release reveals, a reference to a book by queer and feminist theorist Ann Cvetkovich. The theoretical foundation, which suggests an objective intellectual distance, however, seems at odds with the almost sentimental quality of the project itself, which appears, given the show's largest work, *My Inheritance* (all works 2008), to have been partially inspired by the death of the artist's mother. This print depicts twenty-one feeling-triggering objects that Carland scavenged from her mother's house after she passed away: a bingo card, a floral apron, a tattered vintage map of San Francisco, almost-completed crossword puzzles, a ring displaying family birthstones, and a little book embossed in gold with *DIARY 1979*. The selection conveys that strangely impersonal aura of an estate sale, where one person's treasures pass to antique dealers or Dumpsters, and trigger emotions along the way.

This isn't exactly new territory, but it is rich with possibility, and Carland's project achieves a vital balance of warmth and critical distance, mundane intimacy and white-cube formalism. In earlier works, not on view here, she explored notions of domestic life and its residue on objects—her series "Lesbian Beds," 2002, depicts ruffled sheets and pillows, seen from above, without occupants. In the "Archive" works, Carland approaches relationships and community through objects that are more distanced from the interconnections they imply. *One Love Leads to Another* is, like other works in the series, an arrangement of things excised from life, but ones that convey more personal sensibilities and interactions than do pot holders and coffee mugs. The work depicts a loose grid of cassettes and their handwritten, collaged covers. The tapes—from mixes (*Soundtrack to the Revolution, A Bunch O' Punk Rock*) to recordings like *Yoko On Art*, which may or may not hold a lecture given by the Japanese artist—are essentially time capsules in a technologically outmoded format. Like old letters, such tapes are only sporadically revisited, at which times they reveal what memories, what sound tracks, maintain emotional and pop-cultural relevance.

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