

Thomas Erben Gallery

Press Release



*Van*iSh*, 2012. Mixed media on canvas, 15 x 10 in.

Whitney Clafin

As Long As You Get To Be Somebody's Slave, Too

May 24 – July 13, 2012

Opening Reception: Thursday, May 24, 6-8:30 pm

Performance: IMPULSE, Thursday, June 28, 7 pm

Thomas Erben is very excited to present the first solo exhibition at the gallery of new work by **Whitney Clafin**.

On display are paintings of various sizes on linen, canvas, scarves, glass bottles, curtains and dresses, which examine physical and mental states as well as symptoms of instability and oversaturation. Working between the excesses and deficiencies of painting's signification, Clafin's paintings, when taken together, imply a solid, but also dismembered body. This "body" is further shattered and reconstituted when considered alongside Clafin's performances and painted glass bottles, which function sometimes as flower vases, or in this instance as candleholders.

continued...

Thomas Erben Gallery
526 West 26th Street, 4th floor
New York, NY 10001
212-645-8701
info@thomaserben.com
www.thomaserben.com



Lines and mark-making within the works appear dissonant and of various hands: sometimes paint is poured, other times transferred or obscured by fabric. Structural and ornamental motivations become confused when tropes of hysterical insistence (such as sewing a piece of glass onto canvas) are presented alongside an earring precariously placed into a wily, abortive looking piece of found wire. Red herrings emerge through faux indexicality; in *Forget the Salad*, a scented candle is melted onto a collaged surface, distilling and displacing the vertical time measure of the candles burning in the gallery into an already finished act.

The collaged texts in the works suggest incongruous, reflexive voices. Lifestyle copywriting cut from J. Crew catalogs, saturated adjectives extracted from Rolling Stone record reviews and urbane visions snipped from *The New Yorker* come together to describe scenes where assistance is always either sexual or professional. Language is used as a way to unmoor what is set forth by the presence of tangible items. Text from subway

advertisements, banal statements from organic tea bags and girlish visions of romance - as printed on cheap leggings - are re-formatted as punk-ish back-patches, gesturing toward confused personal branding in an auxiliary world.

Though comprised of objects and phrasing taken from the everyday, the works portray a tenuous relationship with reality. Attempting a self-sufficient whirlpool of exchanges, Claflin traded her glass bottle paintings with other vendors on the Venice Beach Boardwalk for digitally printed spandex clothing and other accessories. Cut up and conflated, this apparel is sewn alongside bits of older, failed paintings, jewelry, trash, dried flowers, psoriasis ointment, eye shadow, feathers and other trimmings.

Sardonically mitigating a climate of wanton desire and multitasking, Claflin's work offers a platform for confronting our expectations of painting, bodies, and the exchange value of femininity.

Whitney Claflin (b. 1983, Providence, RI) received her BFA from **RISD**, 2005, and her MFA from **Yale** in 2009; her work has been included in group shows at this gallery in 2010 and 2011. She had a solo exhibition, *Nothing to Blame but Gemini*, with **Real Fine Arts** in 2010, where she also recently performed *IMPULSE*. Other group exhibitions include *Steel Life*, **Michael Benevento**, Los Angeles, 2012; *Happy Holidays! Drawings!* **Alex Zachary Peter Currie**, New York, 2011; *The Open*, **Deitch Projects**, Long Island City, 2009; and *Space Is A Place*, **Portland Institute for Contemporary Art**, 2007. Mary Jones interviewed the artist for **BOMBlog** in 2011. Claflin lives and works in Brooklyn.

Gallery hours: Tue - Sat, 10-6.

For further information and visuals, please visit www.thomaserben.com or contact the gallery at 212-645.8701.

Thomas Erben Gallery
526 West 26th Street, 4th floor
New York, NY 10001
212-645-8701
info@thomaserben.com
www.thomaserben.com