

VANISHING Pt.

Curated by Margaret Evangeline
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Cynthia Broan Gallery

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The erotic body isn't in the symbol, in the icon, or in representation. It's in the trace. Trace absorbs the intimate experience. It quickens in the body, loads the pace of desire's passing into its mark. *Vanishing Pt.* unmasks a sensual armament hidden beneath the safety of art historical references. It does this knowingly yet seemingly by accident. Trace: mobile and unpredictable, passes weightlessly through our gaze to reveal the erotic body.

Richmond Burton, Margaret Evangeline, Jene Highstein, Jacqueline Humphries, Sharon Loudon, Odili Donald Odita and Fran Siegel offer works that develop a current dialog in contemporary art. If there is a common question at the bottom of each work it is, "How do I present what is invisible?" In these works, through a subtle subversion of our limited mortality, the erotic body appears in the loaded mark. The gaze is instinctually drawn to these works that stylize desire and pleasure in their surfaces. Ritualistically, they chart the gradient rise and fall of fervor through repeated gestures. But the gaze is then subverted from its safe detachment in the vanishing point of the personal. These are not works representing the limited body. The gaze seeks a nonexistent likeness. In the wake of an absent representation, the gaze is left with the silent obsessions, the erotic body, that which is unsayable. This momentum of contradictory interplay allows the invisible its materiality. This is earthbound transcendence, bringing us firmly down to a riverbed of pleasure. The dangerous territory dominated by Eros is entered through the *Vanishing Pt.*

Sharon Loudon's site specific installation, *Tips*, is a wellspring of gesture, an enclosure of glowing tips where a ghostly disappearance of light discloses luminous points. We enter a space through black curtains. Daylight vanishes. Darkness takes us by surprise. A field of light, wavering like ten thousand fireflies, is swarming above or below us. We are instantly seduced. But this is play. Hidden in the guise of optical pleasure are underpinnings of the artist's memoir. Supple, agile, intelligent play dispels the darker side of seduction, returns it to buoyancy.

Fran Siegel's "airboxes" use scrim stretched over a square format. The artist paints scrim so that painting itself vanishes into air while space becomes deep and palpable. Scrim seemingly stretched over a suspended breath, bears traces of extinguished fires that have burned through the outer skin of the box, referencing the moment of transformation. There is a restrained danger insinuated in the burn. The glass pieces are thick mirrored slabs, etched to let light through. Like strange objects in a fairytale that are at first apparently stable, they project an aura of instability capable of causing the object's instant disappearance.

Richmond Burton forges painting in the midst of change, a loopy maze of leafy hearts and turns, its presence gives precariousness, a sense of bacchanalian saturation, to itself and to the composite of works in this show. As we adjust to the artist's extreme pursuit of what is hidden, we feel our illusions of normalcy becoming vertiginous, slipping away. In the currency of a rectangular field he loosely bundles color, form and movement to deform the canonical grid. This painting unfastens, without completely undoing, the grip of Logos.

In Margaret Evangeline's *The Uterine Fury of Marie Antoinette*, oil paint on aluminum creates a deep, almost holographic space which defies photographic reproduction. The

reflective brushed aluminum destroys the two-dimensional picture plane. Pyrelene green black, a camouflage pigment, is used as a reminder of desire's stealth, of its political weight. Occupying the "space" between the paint and the aluminum are minute cursive scripts. The artist obscures the words' direct readability, creating a tension between the power of perversion and the volume of its voice.

Jene Highstein's monumental sculpture, *Oracle*, is formed of mature ash wood through the artist's tactile approach to thought. It seems the object has thought itself outward from the artist's core into a rightness. This organic shaping is not a process of ideas, which are ideals, such as perfect geometry. Even though the formal order of his work is evident, he arrives there through pursuit of the thought hidden in the intersection of skin, object, and desire.

There is a certain frisson about Jacqueline Humphries' work in general, and in particular in the painting, *Screen 5*. Shifting phosphorescences under the physical color, violet, and the spoken name of the color, violet, extend conceptual resonance to this clearly resistant color field. Violet, to violate. Desire wounds... her repeated gesture opens faults in the painting's seamless surface skin, unsealing its perfect wrapper. This painting's horizon is strangely tangible, the invisible ground below stealing away, the sense of interior balance put at risk. This is desire bracketed, scissored off, by its material handling, given sang-froid in structure.

Odili Donald Odita uses color that is just below the threshold of verbal languages to produce a patterned syncope. In a succession of rising and falling crescendo/decrescendo, repeated angles taper toward the painting's edge. There, unexpectedly, the point is cut short, challenging the dimensions of containment. This is not the minimal hard edge painting of the 60's, but a version in which something goes awry, goes off, beyond the canvas' edge. Its idiosyncratic repetitions seduce the viewer into contemplation, into the absence created by the voice cut short.

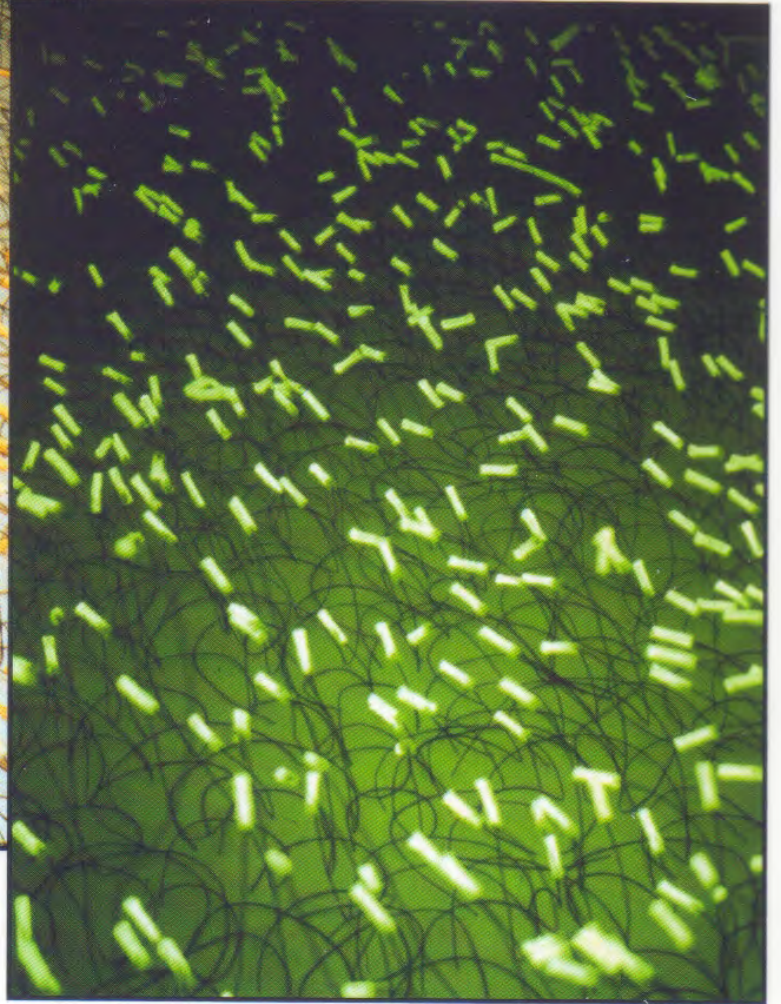
The works in *Vanishing Pt.* are linked by volatility, murmuring under a veneer of superimposed order. Order allows each object to take a position of detachment. It provides viewers safe distance to participate in the mystique of the absent.

Absence is the object of *Vanishing Pt.*

Margaret Evangeline
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Sharon LOUDEN “*Tips*” 1998

(Left: detail shown in daylight; right: detail shown in darkness)

braided cotton dental rolls, luminous paint, glue, steel wire, dimensions variable