

modern dallas

SHARON LOUDEN

at Holly Johnson Gallery through June 22

by Todd Camplin

When minimal sensibilities meet abstract figuration, they give birth to works like Sharon Louden's paintings. Perfectly titled, "Simple Strokes," this show is like viewing an empty room with a crowd of people outside. However, a few unusual pieces of sculpture and one video shake up the grouping of paintings.



Merge Composition, 2012,
aluminum strips, carbon steel screws, 18x20x6"

Sharon Louden comes from a strong pedigree of art schools and it would seem that the work considers many of the art movements of the late 20th century. I see AbEx, classic Minimalism, and a little bit of the whimsical feeling of Paul Klee. Her short, simple strokes seem sophisticated, while managing to almost simulate mark making of well controlled children. Her marks are layered and dance across the canvas with ease. The brush strokes are rich translucent paint which feel charged with energy and life. You can feel the tension between complexity and simplicity in each piece. The quiet ground plane and loud brush stroke rattle the picture with contradictions. Louden might be prophesizing a coming catastrophe or maybe she is foreshadowing an emerging property in the visual arts.



Eventing, 2011
Oil on stretched paper on panel
20 x 28 x 1 1/2 inches

With a clear nod to Frank Gehry, Louden's sculptures address movement like her paintings, but now through the bending of metal and reflection of light. With a splash of color, these silver wall pieces feel like segments of a Post-Modern architectural building. These pieces feel like they could grow all over the walls and ceiling. Such an installation exists, titled "Merge" at the University of Connecticut. These smaller pieces still manage to feel strong and stand alone as sculptures, but I would love to see the installation.

Because this is Dallas, video doesn't always get its full due, but Holly Johnson gives Louden's animation an appropriately prominent display screen. The gallery treats the works like a painting or wall sculpture in that the screen is among the other works. You view it with the paintings and sculptures, and then compare the work. This creates a dialog amidst her work, which is often lacking in other shows that feature artists with such diverse mediums.



Eventing, 2011
Oil on paper
11 x 18 inches



Eventing, 2011
Oil on paper
10 x 10 inches

Sharon Louden's show seems light, but leaves you feeling heavy and thoughtful if you allow the work to seep in. This is not a show you can take a quick run through and get a quick read. Rather, you have to breathe this work in and let it settle in your mind. Yet another thought provoking exhibition by the Holly Johnson Gallery. You have till June 22nd to see the show. By the way, this is the last weekend to see Theresa Chong's work. I may not be able to connect all the dots and dashes in this show, but will miss seeing this work in the back gallery. I imagine Chong and I might be on a similar wave length of thoughts and aesthetics.