

Art in America

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Suzanne McClelland at Larissa Goldston

The resourceful Suzanne McClelland continues to instigate a tussle between the pictorial and the linguistic. The dainty curlicues of *Bitch* (2005, all paintings acrylic, oil and pastel on linen), wispy in black pastel and thinned to a gritty haze, are the exquisite foil for a badass arabesque, in glaring white with a spotty copper glaze. Brushy, animated lettering spells the title in aluminum and more white. The painting is literally logocentric, as the whole thing revolves around the emphatic dot over the "i."

McClelland's recent exhibition, "Slip," the gallery's second show, included the painting *This Pussy* and its companion piece, *That Pussy* (both 6 feet square, 2005). In each, the title is rendered as a pile-up of slithering, super-serifed letters in white, from a prone "P" to a crowning "Y," forming a crotch-like triangle. Lashing skeins of clear acrylic medium course through wiped grounds, in a family of pinks ranging from alizarin to rust, of oceanic vastness. Ghostly tentacles furtively coil; this mania for decorative flourishes and its sexual undertones recalls the (much tighter) work of Paul Henry Ramirez and Ruth Waldman.

A spiral underpins the deceptively pretty *Queen* (2005). Around pink and yellow blossoms against a pearlescent greenish-blue sky, the word "lie" recurs, in gloppy white cursive in a jumbled web with

a central, sooty smudge. And like a cartoon echo or moan of pleasure, rings emanate from an undulating, lipstick-red "O" across a hot yellow ground in *OOO (for Oprah)*, 2003, embellished by jazzily decorated donut shapes and trimmed with a colorless fur boa.

Unorthodox materials are celebrated further in *OOO (for Mary Kelly)*, 2005. The Los Angeles-based feminist/conceptualist, in her 1970s project *Post-Partum Document*, daily annotated then exhibited her infant son's soiled diaper liners;

in McClelland's ode, egg-shaped spots of brown mold sparsely dot a length of linen pinned to the wall, flanked by blue-and-gold ribbons. The 9-by-8-foot *Stud* (2005) is a curtain of white velvet, silk and linen swatches upon which the clumsily-scrawled title is inkjet-printed in various sizes and angles, becoming pattern. Within the shapes forming the letters are images of rocket launches with their attendant phallic plumes of smoke and pictures of men pointing. "STUD" also runs down the left side in blocky gray capitals, like a varsity banner. Blue and white ribbons and bows fleck the surface, which is drizzled over with glazey blue acrylic applied with a honey-dripper or squirt bottle. The artist's erstwhile, gutsy command of her materials is tentative here, but her penetrating logophilia saves the day.

—Stephen Maine



Suzanne McClelland: *OOO (for Oprah)*, 2003, acrylic, oil and pastel on linen, 48 by 38 inches; at Larissa Goldston.