

## "From Here to There"

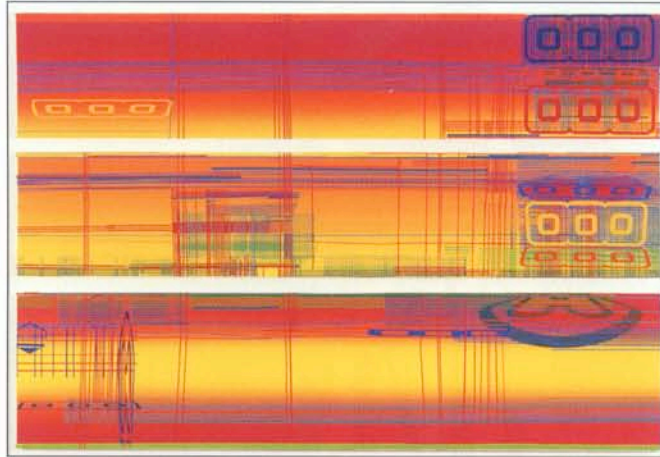
Beverly Fishman, Lemberg Gallery, Ferndale, MI

Beverly Fishman's most recent works, vinyl on powder coated metal paintings, were included in the excellent "Post-Digital Painting" exhibition last year at the Cranbrook Art Museum. These paintings were happily included in an 11-year retrospective "From Here to There" organized by Lemberg Gallery. The survey reflects

Fishman's stylistic development while a member of the faculty at Cranbrook Institute for Art. It is instructive to see this sampling of Fishman's artwork and look at the related and disparate developments that have occurred during her Michigan sojourn.

All of Fishman's work, in its various permutations, reflects her ongoing engagement with diverse materials, technology, and science. *Dividose: H.T.C.* (2002) consists of three long, narrow metal panels stacked one above the other. Each panel combines the same high intensity color scheme of warm reds and yellows reflecting a West Coast landscape aesthetic that serves as the ground for the paintings. The figure is composed of thin strips of computer cut vinyl layered on top of one another to create a pattern evocative of a computer motherboard, EKG, bar scan, or other manufactured mathematical systems. This rigidity and repetition is interrupted by small irregularities such as a vertical line, like an errant child, that goes awry. These minor aberrations inject the human qualities of fragility and unpredictability into the painting. The visual variations function formally to maintain our focus and direct our gaze to various computer icons that subsist somewhere between figure and ground among the vinyl strips. The icons appear familiar although our decoding seems unnecessary. Fishman, for all her high technology and highly polished flourish, is working with the great question that most artists and non-artists struggle with: what it means to be a human today.

Fishman's earlier work relied heavily on photographic collages of material from scientific journals. *W.H.A.C.K. #1-183*, 1997-98, is a photo-based collage with acrylic and resin on wood. This collection of small objects includes dozens of small, amorphous cellular shapes covered with a variety of microscopic images. The images rest on small wooden supports that stand several inches off the wall and are heavily encased in resin. The result is a glossy, abstract arrangement



spread over more than five feet of wall space. Infused with references to our cellular structure and other natural phenomena, *W.H.A.C.K. #1-183* is a free flowing yet controlled and organized installation. Fishman combines this microscopic view of the cellular world with a synthetic or manufactured color scheme that pulls the work beyond the natural world

and into science fiction.

*Just-Relax #1-135*, 1999, is another scattered collage that seems to bridge the gulf between *W.H.A.C.K.* and *Dividose: H.T.C.* A series of small cast objects, pills; letterforms; circles; and variations of other design elements, are cast in translucent material. Some of the elements have neo-geo type patterns embedded on the surface; others remain semi-transparent. The palette of *Just-Relax* is more evocative of an ice cream parlor and the saccharine sweetness that most pharmaceuticals are advertised with today than with the manufactured colors of other work in the exhibition.

Fishman's artwork falls into the ever-widening re-engagement with painting that has taken the discipline by storm over the past five or so years. Fishman's greatest strength is the absolute flexibility to permit her ideas or questions about science and pharmacology's relationship to life today to lead her studio practice. Painters such as Matthew Ritchie and Jim Lambie work with this same material freedom. Ritchie shuffles effortlessly from multi-layered wall and floor-painting installations to vinyl drawings while leaving us dizzily trying to decipher his crypto-language, and Lambie's vinyl tape floor paintings force our reassessment of our architectural environments. Fishman deftly jumps from materials such as photographic transfers from science journals to acrylic paint to computer cut vinyl. Her painterly conversation remains one of the relationships between substance and support, but Fishman works aggressively to expand the definitions of both those terms. Ritchie, Lambie, and Fishman all prove the great flexibility that contemporary painting has to offer both the viewers and studio artists today. ☺

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*Dividose: H.T.C.* (2002) vinyl and powder-coated metal