

David Ryan at MCQ Fine Art

Shotgun Reviews are an open forum where we invite the international art community to contribute timely, short-format responses to an exhibition or event. If you are interested in submitting a Shotgun Review, please click this link for more information. In this Shotgun Review, Dawn-Michelle Baude reviews David Ryan's current solo show at MCQ Fine Art in Las Vegas.

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David Ryan's first solo exhibition in Las Vegas pushes into fresh terrain. In the new body of seventeen works on view at MCQ Fine Art, Ryan has reduced scale, from the bright and sassy wall constructions for which he is known to intriguing, intimate works the size of manila envelopes. His hard-edged abstraction has softened, unfurling into delicate, organic planes.

Yet Ryan's signature moves—the nervy lines, the accreted shapes, the obsession with nesting—are as strong as ever in these painting-and-sculpture combos. In an untitled work from 2014, for example, layers of machine-cut Sintra reproduce a squeegee-and-brush painting in the base stratum—expressionistic work in a vintage palette of aqua, silver, fog blue, white, and crimson. With its gauzy planes, the painting maintains Ryan's interest in blocking color but opts to superimpose rather than juxtapose. The gestural blotches and lines might have been ripped from Pollock or Gorky, but instead of reading as mid-century gestures, the work has a futuristic appeal.

Framing the untitled painting is a layer of white Sintra that juts and jags in an undulating line. Icy-gray Sintra is next, so discreet that it's sometimes visible only in close-up. A contrasting layer of golden bronze follows, adding a spur. The topmost layer—a robust black—skews the baselines even further; the result is a key-hole pattern. The Sintra functions as a kind of algorithmic stencil that notches, skids, snags, and loops around the center, transitioning the eye in and out of arabesques of form and subtle fields of color. In the strongest pieces in this series, the layering does more than frame a two-dimensional painting with

incremental three-dimensional strata—the expanded PVC embodies the painted layer, a biomorph coming to life.

The exhibition also includes two classic Ryan sculptures. The first, *Los Alamos* (2014), is constructed of laser-cut MDF in a linden green, bronze, white, black, and bubblegum-pink palette; the other, *Traced Gesture (Agua Caliente)*, is assembled from aqua, orange, olive green, and beige PVC. Both sculptures are composed of nested shapes accreted from drawings and scaled up into curvy, rounded, abstract forms with peculiar budes and indentations. With its white, puffing plane and dangerous black contours, *Los Alamos* alludes to the explosive act—both atomic and creative—while *Traced Gesture* reads as a compressed Frank Stella, perhaps something from his 1972 *Race Track* series.

The exhibition admirably enlarges Ryan's practice away from Finish Fetish minimalism into more humanistic territory. In doing so, Ryan reveals a more emotional, less controlled side of his practice. The small-scale handmade paintings and stencils suggest that he has promising resources on which to draw.

David Ryan is on view at MCQ Fine Art through January 30, 2015.

Dawn-Michelle Baude's art writing has appeared in artcritical.com, Art Ltd, Art + Auction, and View on Color, among others. She is the art reviewer at the Las Vegas Weekly.