

Early in Jonathon Glazer's recent film *Under the Skin* we meet the main character, an alien played by Scarlett Johansson. Her Outer Space anonymity is resolved when she acquires a human skin. Less certain are her motivations, and we learn soon enough that her mission on Earth is to harvest men. The "found men" were not her only harvest. She later finds other human traits such as fear, compassion and longing.

*Under the Skin* may be just as appropriate a title for James Woodfill's exhibit at City Ice Arts as *the outside of the left side of the inside*. One might ask, "why the obfuscating title?" Here's why. Since Picasso and Braque's analytical cubism it seems second nature to us now, that initial assumptions imply the necessity of other points of view. The multiple points of view in Cubism not only re-orders space, but the implication is that our position in that space is also in question. It's a deconstructivist stance presaged by the parable of Eve's questioning the status quo in the Garden of Eden. We've been holding on tight ever since.

Woodfill asks us to hold on tight to our concepts of what a painting is. He also asks "what's a sculpture? What's space? What's the necessity of us even being in there with it?" The confusion of the title becomes clearer now.

There are moments of superb painting. One is **Mint over Black**. It's a rectangle panel with an opaque, cool minty surface applied over a black ground. In this dynamic context though, it could just as well be lightly marked with black on a cool minty ground.

The language of **Mint over Black** introduces the object(s) deeper in the gallery that trade on Woodfill's elastic topography of choice and necessity. Just beyond **Mint over Black**, in the larger installation, you'll see an aqua-hued panel abutted, and with a slight cant, to an organically grained blonde door panel. It's as poetic a joining of surfaces as you're going to find.

Take a look at the "reverse". Woodfill adopts the hue selection from the "front" but the placements are different. Take a few steps back, lose your gallery-honed 56-inch horizontal line and the wall/floor/ceiling/corners assume pictorial function. Single point perspectives are implied but end up being broken or jagged. How is it possible to have an illusionistic space when the "gallery" collapses into the "work"?

Because the installation tends toward the pictorial and away from illusionism we're returned continually to a sense of the present moment. That immediacy is reinforced by the obvious decisions Woodfill makes: will the C-clamps go here or there and should the lights shine this way or that. The entire exhibit is a moment of decision made up of 1000 decisive moments.

The present moment, and content in *the outside of the left side of the inside*, is a moment reinforced by sound. Near the south side of the gallery is a free-standing sculpture with a mechanized, rotating turntable. The turntable construction, exquisitely anthropomorphic, mimes our human appearance and action. It stands with our familiar proportions. Red LED numerals and lights suggest animation. The electronics emit a loud, static-y drone.

Woodfill's toolkit has always included sound, motion and light. Here the sound is finely situated to the form of the work in two ways. One I think the artist intended: The sound IS the skin for the skeletal form of the sculpture. Sound drapes the installation, keeping it from being just another exercise in geometric balance. The second, perhaps unplanned, aspect of the sound is purely symbolic. Perfectly situated at the head of an aisle, that I will call a nave, the static-y, overbearing drone gives voice to the noise of the artworld, the preaching of the parent/professor/expert, all obstacles to genuine perception and contact.

This is the last show at City Ice Arts.

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