



2-D/3-D

at Traywick Contemporary, Berkeley, CA
by Dewitt Cheng



Aurora Robson, 'Peoria,' 2008, discarded plastic bottles, tinted polycrylic, mica powder, rivets and monofilament

Most art contains both figuration and abstraction in varying proportions: realism needs an abstract structure, while abstraction generally alludes to visible realities, even if they remain ambiguous. Art generally tries to escape being limited to its formalist properties, and may have done so, arguably, even during the Clement Greenberg era, when theory ran riot. "2-D/3-D" features five artists - Mari Andrews, Jessica Martin, David McDonald, Aurora Robson and Lucrecia Troncoso - who create hybrid drawings/paintings and sculpture sharing common elements and approaches. Martin writes, "Working in two and three dimensions gives me a way to add more layers of imagery and meaning to my work.... Sometimes a detail of a sculpture will be translated onto a painting (or vice versa), and the original and new [developed] imagery are fused. As a result, the past, present, real and imagined exist together."

That cross-medium fertilization manifests in different ways. Andrews makes poetic wire constructions ("Acocoil," "Ramble"), or drawings in space, that incorporate found natural objects like pebbles, pods, and thorns. Her framed wall pieces ("Eye," "Glass"), with their twig-like wire armatures and paper skins, look like diagrams or X-rays of three-dimensional sculptures. The floral motifs in Martin's ink/acrylic drawings and paintings ("Untitled bronze") take physical form in her wax and hot-glue "Imaginary Object" sculptures. McDonald's vocabulary of irregular rectangles in his untitled works on paper is made physical in "Ikebukuro," a precariously stacked double tower of blocks, some painted, some left raw, that also resembles crude legs, minus torso, atop a podium. Robson finds ingenious ways to recycle the stuff most of us toss out: junk-mail solicitations become lyrical semi-abstract collages ("Active Ingredient"), albeit laced with ad-copy superlatives; and plastic bottles, some 50,000 of which she has reclaimed for art, become jungles or seas of extravagantly beautiful (and bleach-sterilized) airbrushed assemblages. Troncoso, finally, makes the dueling of artistic modes her subject in "Fireflies," a yellow painting on paper mounted behind a spray of white Christmas tree lights (not blinking), and "Immortal," an array of framed colored-paper squares matched with painted versions on panel.