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Art review

Aaron Curry, “The Colour Out of Space”

[Werner](#), through Apr 25



DEFT COMPOSTION (DEFT COMPOSITION)
Photograph: Courtesy Michael Werner Gallery, New York

Filching the title of his New York solo debut from one of the best-known tales by cult horror scribe H.P. Lovecraft, Aaron Curry presents an oblique take on that story’s strangely beautiful yet murderous extraterrestrial invaders. In an exhibition spanning two elegant venues—Michael Werner proper and its project space a few blocks away—the L.A. artist presents an array of contrastingly gaudy, gawky sculptures in metal and wood, and a suite of similarly eye-burning paintings on paper.

In both sets of work, abstract and figurative elements converge in a dissonant clash of modern and premodern. But while there’s no doubting Curry’s energy or the diversity of his sources, genuine sympathy for the artist’s project hinges on one’s tolerance for willful—albeit playful—ugliness.

Common to most of the sculptures is a biomorphic-anthropomorphic twist. BOY WITH HORNS (WITH MOUNTAINS IN HIS POCKET) is typical: At first evoking a Noguchi-esque abstraction, the paint-splattered form coheres into a cartoonlike screaming figure when seen from the appropriate vantage. Another shared feature is flat-pack-style construction; the purple aluminum components of DANNY SKULLFACE SKY BOAT (RECLINING) look slotted together rather than welded. Curry summons dimensional confusion from depthlessness, too; layering and juxtaposing gestural, trompe l’oeil and collage effects, his works on paper seem derived in part from the material impossibilities of Photoshop. And in BAD DIMENSION (INFINITE REBOOT), he gives a pair of knifelike metal cutouts leaning against the wall a coating of decorative graffiti. The combination—seductive but lurid, and potentially lethal—is Lovecraft all the way.—MICHAEL WILSON