

Derosia

Bosko Blagojevic, Artforum, January 2014

ARTFORUM



Whitney Clafin, C. F., 2013, oil on linen, 36 x 24".

alongside gouache, melted candle wax, red wine, and cosmetic products to create complex, extroverted abstractions.

NEW YORK

Whitney Clafin

REAL FINE ARTS

184 STERLING PLACE 2ND FL

January 4–February 16, 2014

Whitney Clafin dresses her deadstock prestretched canvases with a flip attitude that borrows as much from 1980s painting out of Cologne as it does from the craft of the makeup artist. For “Crows,” her second solo exhibition at Real Fine Arts, Clafin returns brushstrokes to her abstractions for the first time in several years—her recent shows have presented works in which paint was applied by less conventional means, such as by squeegee, transfer via paper, or sticks. Here, she uses carefully mixed oil colors

Many of the paintings are nebulas of alluring, sparsely applied colors, which take an explicitly seductive approach to draw viewers into the works’ deeper logic. The glossy teen lipstick hues in *Untitled*, 2013, for example, bring us into a work that evokes a broken typography with its incomplete glyphs and curvilinear strokes. This lipstick-traces-on-the-wall narrative is quickly derailed by a larger form near the bottom right that suggests something more corporeal—an internal organ, perhaps. Other works such as *Fice Fice Fice Fice* and *C. F.*, both 2013, create similar tensions, evoking a hospital bed with their clean white base and messy, unpredictable spills of color. These pools of pigment contrast with floral palettes that seem lifted from nature while possessing a post-Photoshop intensification of affect.

The key to “Crows” might be a murdered-out matte-black display case (that Clafin also designed) with typewritten poems and drawings on paper on top of it, all of which constitutes a single piece. Here, typeset and hand-rendered text is depicted alongside drawings of more fleshed-out elements—things that we may sense, if not fully see, in the paintings that encircle the display case, which is positioned in the center of the gallery. In one drawing, a woman masturbates on her knees; in another, a candle burns. Words such as *fuck*, *scar*, *divine flow*, and *vibrato* quiver in faded ink printed by an antique typewriter. Emotionally laden half-sentences that could have been excerpted from late-night e-mails add a denser center to an exhibition that exists as a cloudy mass of moods and whispers.

— *Boško Blagojević*