



"FIRING FOR EFFECT" (DETAIL), 2010, **Thomas Doyle**
MIXED MEDIA, 44" DIAMETER
PHOTO: COURTESY LeBASSE PROJECTS

rich and uncompromising images, each a robust and muscularly seething red rose that challenges our notions of traditional beauty and its symbolism while simultaneously offering up a *memento mori* devoid of all sentimentality. In fact, Morphesis exposes the underpainting in many cases, a smudge of Kelly green or hot pink showing through the edges.

The obvious association here is romantic love, lust and desire, and Morphesis spares nothing, fiercely layering color and form as though each image was an activated living space. The roses, each a particular species that includes the Corvette and the Hothouse, suggest the physicality of the human body, but more importantly, stand as metaphoric suggestions of a more dangerous and hidden human potential. The viewer consumes these sumptuous images yet is consumed by them, perhaps unknowingly. Each of these paintings can be "consumed" on their own separately; yet it is the entirety of the experience, taking them in as a whole, that is altogether unnerving and stunning in its rawness and power. The petals are ripe and outrageous, almost sickeningly sweet, rimmed in orange and blinding in their saturation, bringing to mind the indissoluble relationship between death and desire. It's not clear here which is preferable, and perhaps the experience of looking at these works is its own approximation of *la petite mort*, the glorious "little death."

—EVE WOOD

"COLOR FIELD, NO. 1 – SAND, OCEAN, KELP"
2011/12
Zack Paul
ACRYLIC ON BOARD, 30" X 40"
PHOTO: COURTESY SULLIVAN GOSS GALLERY

LOS ANGELES
Thomas Doyle: "Surface to Air"
at LeBasse Projects

In what feels like an act of both outrage and tenderness, NY-based artist Thomas Doyle dares to imagine the unimaginable, then renders it with extraordinary precision. Doyle's dark narratives are created using tiny figurines which he sets amid fantastical, yet all-too-ordinary, environments wherein private domestic scenarios play out against a grim backdrop of wholesale devastation. Using toy-like means to enact his sobering, surreal tableaux, the works teeter in tone between a manifestation of childhood fears and fantasies, and a very adult anxiety at humanity's capacity for destruction. His recent, memorable solo show at LeBasse Projects in Culver City, titled "Surface to Air," featured several of his signature, small-scale model worlds in chaos, alongside an eerily effective series of close-up photographs on dense rag paper of some of the child figures from his works. With their colored outfits and indistinct faces flecked daintily with grime and debris, these images seem oddly innocent, but also, in their retro-'50s mien, like relics from a blunter era in modern history, when the potential consequences of world war and atomic power were still headline news. Thus, Doyle's works channel the shock value and domestic longings of a bygone generation to remind us afresh of the ongoing threat to human hearth and home.

It is with the models that his works find their clearest voice. In *Armistice*, members of a family sort through their belongings amid the pastel-painted rooms of a home that's half gone, with a gaping hole in the earth—from a surface-to-air missile?—where the other half should be. In *Prologue*, a white suburban ranch house is preserved in a conical vitrine, the craggy shaft of earth beneath it offering a core sample of ruins; beside the door, a man

digs a grave as a woman looks on. *Firing For Effect* presents a sphere within a sphere: the outer sphere holds a circle of blasted earth with a crater in its center while hovering above it in a smaller sphere, as if scooped off the surface, is a stately Victorian home amid its tiny slice of lawn and nestled trees. Peering closer, we see a man approaching the door with a boy in overalls, as a woman waits on the porch. In this case, the term "surface to air" is given a transcendent alternate meaning; like so much of his work, it posits the willful suspension of hope above a barren landscape of apocalypse.

—GEORGE MELROD

SANTA BARBARA
Zack Paul: "Inside Out"
at Sullivan Goss Gallery

"Inside Out," Zack Paul's first solo show of paintings, currently on view at Santa Barbara's Sullivan Goss Gallery, reflects a tension between two major influences: mid-century Constructivist painting of Paul's native Argentina and the history of hard-edged painting in Southern California, where the artist has lived for the past decade. Paul's skill is most evident in his canny evocation of space and movement in the recent abstractions—hard-edged acrylic paintings on panel that measure between 24 by 18 inches and 30 by 40 inches from the *Commonplace* and *Color Fields* series. Though Paul's *Color Fields* recall the dynamic compositions of Karl Benjamin, Paul's palette is more limited and makes explicit reference to the natural colors of Southern California's coastline, as in *Color Field, No. 1 – Sand, Ocean, Kelp* and *Color Field, No. 3 – Coral, Stones, and Seaweed* (both 2011-12). These natural colors, however, are mapped onto the angular features of the built environment, and in both of the above-mentioned paintings the light areas are reminiscent of the bright sun-lit adobe walls so pervasive in the Southern





"CROSSING TO SAFETY," 2010, Gail Roberts
OIL ON CANVAS, 84" x 35"
PHOTO: COURTESY CARNEGIE ART MUSEUM

California landscape. In *Color Field, No. 1*, alternating areas of light beige and shadowy dark jade give the impression of a walkway receding into the distance.

The companion pieces to these three *Color Fields* paintings include three sets of three small (6 by 6 inches) preliminary paintings (*Realization Time* numbers 1-9) and three sculpturally arranged painted panels mounted on board (*Tents* number 1-3). While the complexity of their construction suggests that the *Tents* represent the culmination of Paul's work, his sophisticated treatment of space and the illusion of depth in the large flat panels remain most compelling. The sculptural objects, geometric abstractions painted on panels that are then propped against each other to resemble partially folded boxes or tents, seem to flatten out the possibility of movement even as they literally expand the work into three dimensions. Paul's most original work, on the other hand, constructs an illusion of depth

that is more powerful even than the reality of three-dimensional space.

—KIM BEIL

OXNARD, CA

Gail Roberts: "Entanglement" at the Carnegie Art Museum

Gail Roberts is a representational painter of great skill and subtlety who employs her considerably facility with the brush to probe the limits and boundaries of painting's traditional genres. In this show of mostly quite large still lifes (from 40 by 40 inches to as big as 68 by 72 inches), Roberts uses two seemingly unrelated objects—birds' nests and books—to convey a playful, slightly dark sense of wonder at the interpenetration of nature and culture in the urban parts of southern California. Roberts has been collecting and painting nests since at least 2004, but the introduction of the books, which she often groups by theme or title, injects a semiotic element that pulls the work further in the direction of Surrealism. The words these books carry complicate her images in interesting ways and engage the viewer in the process of constructing the works' meaning. The marvelous and suggestive *One Flew Over* shows a stack of three books—"One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest," "To Kill A Mockingbird," and "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"—supporting a particularly expressive and joyous example of a freeform nest. As in many of the images in the series, the whole stack of things floats somehow on a beautifully rendered reflective liquid surface.

The Carnegie Art Museum has done an excellent job installing the show, and the second floor gallery, where the larger pictures are hanging, makes an especially strong statement. These giant canvases with their supersized, exuberant nests appear nearly three dimensional, and the intricate weave of their materials lends a certain frisson to the

recognition of such familiar sources as tattered newsprint, bits of shopping bag, and dryer lint. In addition to demonstrating a ravishing command of scale and detail, Roberts comes across as an enigmatic and independent thinker whose work challenges assumptions even as it pleases the senses. With "Entanglement," Gail Roberts has built a new kind of nest in the Carnegie, woven with patience and tenderness, but built out of surprising, even jarring fragments of disparate worlds.

—CHARLES DONELAN

LAGUNA BEACH, CA

"¡Cuba! 11 Artists Speak for 11 Million" at Salt Fine Art

Subtle humor and a profound sense of irony infuse personal and political commentary on life in Castro's Cuba as seen in this deftly curated show at Salt Fine Art in Laguna Beach. During a recent visit to the island, Salt Fine Art proprietor Carla Tesak Arzente selected works by 11 artists who live and work there and are allowed to show internationally. The show's success is also attributable to Cuban gallerist Sandra Contreras who guided Arzente toward a roster of artists including husband Ernesto Javier Fernandez, a photo-journalist/artist who turns B&W photographs into double-entendres by juxtaposing them with neon verbiage. *Wash Your Hands* is superimposed on an image of laundry hung between dilapidated apartment buildings. It's an ironic admonition, given that soap is at times inaccessible enough to warrant "renting" a bar, notes Arzente. Esterio Segura is blunt and accessible, and correspondingly banned from showing his "Pinocchios" at home but not abroad. For him, the storied liar stands in for Communist propagandists in an installation titled *History of an Old Fisherman*. Trapped in a cage, Pinocchio's nose has grown into a fishing pole dangling a tiny sickle and an even smaller fish while his hands, clasped behind his back, hold a large hammer. Segura illustrates his disdain even more overtly in *Enjoying Ideology*, a linear wall sculpture showing a couple doing with each other what, in the vernacular, Castro has done to Cuba.

Although politics prevail, the artists also explore personal/gender issues, as seen in Aimee Garcia's *Obsession* and *Encounter*, in which the artist first cuts off her hair, then examines the "westernized" version of herself as a disembodied head. Other artists voice their disdain at being denied techno access to the world outside as Abel Barroso humorously does in *Calling Home*, a roughly hewn wooden public phone that most under 25 hereabouts would be hard pressed to remember.

"ENCOUNTER," 2004, Aimee Garcia
PERFORMANCE PHOTOGRAPHY
27" x 20 1/2" LIMITED EDITION 2/10
PHOTO: COURTESY SALT FINE ART

