

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

The paintings that comprise Kate Davis Caldwell's new show of work, "Reclaim | Transpose," are works of visual literacy akin to the textual ones we term "books." Each one of Caldwell's paintings holds a fluttering set of visual pages, layers that we are encouraged to rifle through, and find connection within. Her work is rich with layered imagery; iconographic figures who float above and beneath fields of pattern and shifting colors. Images appropriated from old photographs, cutout dolls, old wallpaper, history books and a wealth of other sources are placed within the frame of the canvas in a manner which both invites and resists the comparison to literary forms. These paintings offer the viewer several passages in and through them and like smudging one's hot hand across old wallpaper, we slip and slide through the layers of patterned colors on a very pleasurable journey.

In the use of color Caldwell truly excels. While it is easy to become carried along by the richness of textures, patterning, and imagery it becomes clear that her understanding of color is what weaves the layers tightly together. Strong colors in unexpected combinations ripple across the canvases creating areas where we are lifted forward and out of the painted space. Vibrant ochres edge against pea-greens and cadmium in a way which creates a shift in the tone as well as delineating a particular edge. These choices in color form the balancing point of the exhibition. Certain colors appear in varying contexts in each work and in each one there is an awareness of exactly what that particular color is doing in that position. For all the layering of pattern and object, Caldwell's highly tuned sense of when the color is "right" is key.

Kate Davis Caldwell wants us to make connections to the objects represented in the paintings. She gives us playful colors, blocky numbers, words that are spilled across the canvas like scrabble letters being pulled for use in the next game. Each painting, while complete in itself, leads inevitably to the rest. They share the idea of an artist commenting upon the female sensibility while not restricting the work to being "girlwork." Her paintings are guides; maps to follow to see what this world holds. They illuminate ideas rather than espouse traditions; in this way we are allowed to form our own connections to the canvases.

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