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Blobs, Under the Radar: Charles Andresen at Guided by Invoices

by **Drew Lowenstein**

Arizona-raised Charles Andresen – who has been painting under the radar in New York City for the last 20 years – has been given the inaugural show at Guided by Invoices, a new gallery in Chelsea. The exhibition demonstrates just how deep New York’s abstract painting talent pool is. Densely packed, colorful, and rhythmic, Andresen’s acrylic blobs jostle for position within each composition of these eight modestly sized paintings. Including paintings from 2001 to the present, curator Chris Byrne has indexed Andresen’s aesthetic from the raucous to the sublime.



Gelb, 2007. Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 33.

These are tirelessly jubilant gestural abstract paintings. The excessive pile-ups of thrown paint splats yield so many successful accidents they seem to rewrite the unwritten laws of action painting. Andresen’s quirky, mediated process can be likened to making an omelet – the base, pigmented gel, is poured on a smooth surface to receive the *fixins*: streams of colored lines and dots. But instead of folding the omelet, it is scooped open-face by spatula and flung, creating striking effects and patterns upon impact with the canvas. Andresen prohibits himself from any further manipulations on the canvas support. He calls these gooey paint assemblages “Throw Paintings.”

In the Baroque composition *Gelb* (2007), Andresen’s finely tuned, in-the-moment paint decisions make for an effortless viewing pleasure. Our eye just keeps sailing in and out of this marbled, greenish yellow surface with blue veining and Polke-esque orange dots. And Andresen easily demonstrates how

gestural surface activity can produce sudden illusions of depth. David Reed wrote that Dave Hickey told him “Liquidity is the new depth.” For Andresen, liquefied chaos coagulates to serve an emergent lyrical narrative, within the structure of an all-over field. And in light of the current de Kooning retrospective at MOMA, Andresen’s paintings underscore the ongoing significance of those incisive 1948 black and white enamels, languid paint gushes of the 60 and 70’s, and soaring white cut pastel ribbons from 1981-85.

Andresen also adulterates the material excesses associated with Larry Poons, the bizarrely underappreciated Stanley Boxer and Jules Olitski, particularly his iridescent, taste-bending, luxuriant lathers circa 1990. In *Densities of Intensities* (2009), Andresen’s distanced hand and insistently impure process serve to heighten the phantasmagorical nature of this image and deepen space. Using the weighty physicality of adjacently layered paint blobs to create color contrast, Andresen builds a web that both frames and connects multifocal events. Peppered throughout, Cheshire stripes and toadstool dots stretch and shrink gesture and space like mirages on a desert highway. Striated ribboning characteristic of Murano glass pulses through the acrylic paint, injecting velocity, directionality and warped perspective into the forms. Glassy greens glisten, and an enamel-like powder blue punches holes into the sky. This dense assembly of raucous color, texture and evocative form would make a sympathetic pairing with Daniel Weiner’s riveting polymorphous sculptures were reviewed [here](#) at artcritical recently.

Drenched in rich browns, the tonality of *O’odham Rhythm* (2001) is a welcome respite from the abundance of color in the rest of the exhibition. Like a box of assorted chocolates, a brocade of caramel toffees, mochas and swirling dark and milk concoctions spins out from the opulent bilateral draping top and center. And *Bear Dance* (2010), likely influenced by the Native American ceremonial dances that Andresen observes regularly, is a vibrant relief of concretions that provide hall-of-mirror distortions and melted glyphs. That Andresen creates eye candy is undeniable. In *Frozen Jesters* (2011) twisting lanes of candy cane stripes that allude to brushstrokes appear to converge with accumulations of gum-splatted, swirling peppermint rounds.

Some of these surfaces seem to want to jump the canvas for a larger one. I for one hope Andresen finds a way to “throw” a few big ones up as well next time around.