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ANDREW RUSSETH, THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

Gina Beavers, "Tapestry Embrace," at PACS Gallery



Gina Beavers, *In this nude, the sculptural quality*, 2011. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 26 x 32 in.

Ultra-slim, ultra-thin, gold-tipped high heels against a chalky white background. The white outline of a washing machine floating against the ceiling in a sterile,

dimly lit corporate space. A white canvas, blank except for a paint palette and a paintbrush. Those are the contents of three different paintings, all by **Gina Beavers**, which were included in her recent one-night show at the [PACS Gallery in Williamsburg](#). To put it reductively, Beavers' work is diverse.

In [the show's press release](#), Beavers explains that its title, "Tapestry Embrace," is a dish at [the Zen Palate restaurant](#) in the Theater District (its slogan is "The Art of Eating Well"), and admits that, when she was first considering the name, she didn't actually know what was in it. "I could have sworn it said ... something about a wrap, and the sides of the wrap enclosing the ingredients in an 'embrace,'" she writes.

But Beavers was wrong. "Tapestry Embrace," the dish, actually features, in her words, "grilled seitan (soy) steak and shiitake mushroom in teriyaki sauce, garnished with grilled zucchini, yellow squash and a banana-leaf filled rice cone." Nevertheless, she kept the title. "Oh well." (She notes that the phrase is actually twice borrowed, having also emblazoned it on one of the posters included in [Price Good Market Inc.](#), the endearing art store that Beavers and Denise Kupferschmidt staged at St. Cecilia's Convent earlier this year.)

A similarly curious, casual approach to appropriation operates in Beavers's paintings. In [an earlier statement](#), she writes of her process, "I get an idea, which I either photograph or look up by typing key words into google images." Sometimes, when the internet fails, she constructs sketches of an image from memory. Regardless, she says, "I then paint as closely as I can, the original idea. If it's from a photo, I stick slavishly to the photo, in a submissive way." But Beavers is not quite as subservient as she claims; she has a definite, definable style, or at least certain notable interests. When she really wants to lay on the paint, she does so in controlled, heavy passages. Those ski-slope-steep black heels project well off the canvas, and the washing machine's outline has the solidity and thickness of a long Tootsie Roll.

When she paints people — and this is where things get most interesting — Beavers applies color in quick patches. Line and disparate colors collide and form angles, cheekbones, faces. There's a whiff of [mid-to-late Picabia](#) in a double portrait called *Observe the intention of the pose* (2011) and a feint toward [Eric Fischl](#) in the gray *In this nude, the sculptural quality* (2011). (Both works are below.) They're psychologically affecting portraits, staring out at us not quite impassively.

Where are these people coming from? That nude could be from any number of paintings or films or porn shoots. But churned through Beavers's process, and placed in that epic frame, its source is obscured, though never vanquished. We know that we've seen images like this before, but we can't quite place it. I know I've seen those heels before, perhaps as a drawing on the stand of a SoHo street vendor or sitting, just as shoes, in a friend's apartment. She has also copied some drawings that are, according to their titles, by children. (One is above.) They look like the work of **Joe Bradley**.

However obscure the sources of some of Beavers's images may be, the roots of her titles are, at least, not in doubt. The two mentioned above come from a 1942 textbook called *Anyone Can Paint!* From some artists, that buried reference would read as raw sarcasm ("no, most people cannot paint") or a snide remark ("yes, true enough, but they shouldn't"). But coming from Beavers, who borrows and reworks images — across genres, media, and styles — with a care and peculiarity that I can only read as somehow deeply personal, I'm tempted to understand it as an optimistic exhortation, albeit one with an edge. "Anyone can paint!" she says. Cue that blank painting. "Now, what will you have us look at?"