



The good taste of Gina Beavers

GALLERY AND MUSEUM EXHIBITS DECEMBER 2, 2012 **BY: HOWARD SCHWARTZ**



One is tempted to bring a fork, a knife, and a healthy appetite to the Gina Beavers exhibit in the Clifton Benevento gallery. This is not for the purpose of attending the exhibit's opening and enjoying the wine and cheese being served for the occasion. Rather, on an empty stomach, one may be tempted to eat the paintings themselves.

Ms. Beavers paints food, but not in a historically typical manner. The food is cooked and put on a plate

for the viewer's consumption. The horizon line is from above. The pieces of chicken and French fries and lettuce burst free from the boundaries of the two-dimensional canvases and fill three-dimensional space. These acrylic paintings are relief sculptures as much as they are paintings.

Other works of art are tactile (the paintings of Michelangelo, for example) or more optical (such as Chardin). What does this mean? A Michelangelo painting in the Sistine Chapel has a sculptural quality about it; the human figures do not blend into the background and are not meant to do so. Conceptually, the shadows of the figures and the shadows of the background are thought of as two separate entities

and are painted that way. But this is not the way the human eye sees the shadows. The human eye sees the tone and the color and the temperature and the intensity of the shadow and isn't concerned about whether the shadow belongs to the cheek or the hair or the wall behind them. Often the distinction among the many named objects in a painting are blurred or completely lost. This is one of the significant differences between Renaissance art and [Baroque art](#). Baroque artists such as Rembrandt paint optical paintings. They don't ignore form; however, the emphasis is more optical.

Ms. Beavers invites the senses of smell and taste to join the party. This rare and unusual quality alters the experience of looking at the paintings, and in a positive way. The textures of the food, especially the chicken, are replicated in the paintings, but not so closely that artistic quality is lost. The paintings are playful.

How is the relief-like quality achieved? Each painting begins with a coat of acrylic composite. When acrylic is painted on top of the composite, along with the addition of pumice, beads, and other media, the paint becomes three-dimensional.

The paintings encourage the viewer to want to go to Ms. Beavers' home for dinner. However, in lieu of that option, one may visit this exhibit in the Clifton Benevento gallery from now until December 22. The owners of the gallery are unusually hospitable; warm, friendly, and willing to answer questions about Ms. Beavers and her art. The gallery website is www.cliftonbenevento.com. The address for this Soho gallery is 515 Broadway, New York NY 10012. The phone number is 212-431-6325.