

carla

Snap Reviews

May 17, 2018

Gina Beavers
at Michael Benevento

—Aaron Horst



Gina Beavers' attentions, in *Van Goddess* and *the Masturbakers* at Michael Benevento, have turned to the aged cultural talismans of 20th century masculinity. Beavers' male sources share lineal origin in the bloated boomer narratives—mainly relating to rock music, the cultural shifts of the late '60s, and the art-historical avant garde—that I for one, fatigued cultural observer, would rather put to bed. Neither Mondrian nor Mick Jagger escape her wit.

Photoshop Mistake Mondrian Cube (all works 2018) consists of a giant platform, teetering on a guitar amp at one corner, over which patterns and forms in the style of Mondrian crawl over low-relief profiles of a woman's shoe, face, and body. For some reason, the sculpture takes up the entire room—and the Old Masters keep getting in Beavers' way. In the adjoining room, Beavers recreates Van Gogh's painting palette, blown up to nearly 7 feet in height and wall hung, looming like a creaky door teetering on dusty collapse.

Money Lips 1 and *Crotch Coins* draw the same shopworn, postmodern line between capitalism and (women's) sex; the former features acrylic-painted cardboard rolls of money that seem a compositional afterthought in their haphazard hanging off of an underlying, low-relief mouth. Similarly, Beavers' *Van Gogh* series (as in *Van Gogh Skirt*, *Van Gogh Mug*, etc) threads together consumerism and classicized meaning with little in the way of context. Mass reproduction of modern art clearly gets on Beavers' nerves; less clear is whether her own reproduction of these reproductions evinces astute cultural critique or mere snobbery.

Beavers' fixates on a certain type of masculine-indexed personal freedom—all guitar chords, overblown gestures, money, and anonymous, oversexed babes. Beavers has an understandable axe to grind with macho culture, of the popular and avant-garde sort (if these are even different anymore). Still I can't escape the feeling of something rote in a female artist spending so much time in the orbit of famous men's work—the same aspect of Sturtevant's practice that leaves me chuckling, but cold. The press release notes that *Van Goddess* "addresses the dissolving structures of masculinity today" (someone please alert the Trump administration). Latent in Beavers' withering critique is a vein of unwitting homage.

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