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A gallery of Gaetanos

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ART REVIEW: Father and son elevate the mundane through paintings, mixed media



Nick Gaetano's *Dizzy*

The apple may not fall far from the tree, but its velocity and trajectory make it a distinctive offshoot at Marty Walker Gallery. Like his father, the Laguna Beach, Calif.-based painter Nick Gaetano, Rhys Davies-Gaetano is an artist. Unlike his father, Mr. Davies-Gaetano lives in Brooklyn, N.Y., and makes complex, interactive and wheezing objects.

The brightly colored patterns of Mr. Gaetano's smooth painted surfaces installed next to the motion-activated whir and sizzle of Mr. Davies-Gaetano's devices creates a provocative asymmetry. The paintings are silent, flat and formal, while the doohickeys click and clack with an absurdity rivaling Rube Goldberg's machines.

That said, there's an alliance in their shared celebration of the mundane showing in concurrent exhibitions at the gallery. If the father's paintings are poppy in the sense of Warhol, the son's are so like a kernel of corn bursting.

In Mr. Gaetano's *It's OK 2 Taste*, an almost fluorescent green peeks out from beneath a bright- orange surface. On top, five black orbs are stilled midtumble. With the color of Victor Vasarely and the patterned swirl of Bridget Riley, it is an idyll on flower power and everyday life on the beach.

In an adjacent room, Mr. Davies-Gaetano's *Family* offers figural dissonance in four parts: a can opener zizzing next to a hair dryer that blows up a makeshift skirt; two sets of children's overalls hanging on the wall with plastic spigots dangling from each fly; a zipper on a pair of pleated brown pants pulled up, then down, over and over; and a beer can on an electric eye. Somewhere between the beer can and the brown pants there's a motion detector that, with a viewer's presence, sets the interconnected pieces a-twirl.

A change of scenery has done Dad some good. Mr. Gaetano moved recently from Dallas to Laguna Beach, and his abstract vocabulary followed suit. It shifted from ho-hum organic striations suggestive of running silt to monochromatic whirls atop colored checkerboards that tell of Vans-wearing beachcombers.

The newfound success is owed to site-specificity. Before the move, his surfaces of pulled paint and repetitive form read like boredom in the hinterlands. With respect to his new work, think Jeff Spicoli riding a 6-foot wave. The black wavy form on top of orange-and-red stripes in *Dizzy* mimics the flow and form of the Pacific Ocean. If there's a single consistency here, it is color. Mr. Gaetano has always had a knack for it.

A recent graduate of the Cooper Union School in Manhattan and a member of the Bruce High Quality Foundation, an artists collective, Mr. Davies-Gaetano is little interested in color or flatness, not to mention paint. Somewhere between Marcel Duchamp and Jack Pierson, his contraptions are ad hoc and hip.

Hair Gel With Sock and *Easy Cheese and Light* fuse eroticism to the household object, yielding a surrealism of the commonplace. An upside-down jar of hair gel slowly drips into a tube sock. *Easy Cheese and Light* is mechanically activated. Plug it in and cheese squirts from a canister and dries on a yellow light bulb.

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"New Paintings by Nick Gaetano" and "Faults May Shake" by Rhys Davies-Gaetano continue through June 16 at Marty Walker Gallery, 2135 Farrington St. Hours: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesdays through Saturdays and by appointment. Free. 214-749-0066, www.martywalkergallery.com.