

Park Cities People

Abstract Origins

Paintings at Marty Walker Gallery display innovative artistry

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By Lucia Simek

Special Contributor

The new show at Marty Walker Gallery featuring recent paintings by Jeff Elrod, Mark Flood, and Jeff Zilm feels a bit like eavesdropping on a conversation between close friends.

While you'd be hard pressed to find many visual similarities between the work of these three — except that they all paint — there seems to be an understanding among them about what it means to be an artist in the 21st century.

The large works by Jeff Zilm are the first apparent as you begin to walk the gallery. The four pieces are somber, three in hues of black and one in white with wispy black at the center. Zilm achieves a ghostly black in these paintings by using pigment from 35-mm film negatives to make his own paint. It's a stunning process that essentially reconstitutes memory and motion recorded on film into liquid form. His film/paint washes stain the canvas, the history of their random trajectory recorded in subtle, smoky tones.

On the piece "Untitled (The Fat and Lean)," Zilm has painted solid black vertical lines at either side of the canvas and one thin horizontal line three-quarters of the way down the composition. The inky green-black color of the piece seems to form shadowy images that are framed here in the black lines, remembering the paint's origin as photography.

The whimsical work of Mark Flood follows Zilm's along the next wall. Flood uses old lace as a stencil in his paintings, letting the fabric fall at random and then discovering figures in the shapes that are made. The first of these pieces have mostly white, fairy-like figures in them, floating on light, metallic-textured paint. The matte white of the figures, and the few highlights of color at places where eyes or mouths could be gives them a fanciful air.



Jeff Elrod *Ancient Mariner* 2007 Acrylic on Linen
Currently on display at Marty Walker Gallery.

**NEW PAINTINGS BY JEFF
ELROD, MARK FLOOD AND
JEFF ZILM**

MARTY WALKER GALLERY
2135 Farrington St., Dallas
214-749-0066
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The farther along the wall you walk, however, the darker Flood's work becomes, as if you're entering the part of the woods that is never good in fairy tales. Perched (hung) just beneath the rafters of the ceiling, out of sync with the others, is a piece called "Owl." A lacy yellow owl painted on black looks down on viewers and marks the beginning of a new group of paintings with multicolored, lace figures floating on iridescent black paint. The motion of the characters in the paintings "Rock 'N Roll Suicide" and "The Footman" is similar to that in Robert Longo's drawings of grotesquely contorted, suited figures from the 1980s. As in those, you feel a desperate purpose in Flood's pieces — a feeling heightened by the haunting use of old and eerie lace.

Three airy paintings on linen by Jeff Elrod are a relief to look at after the tension of Flood's work. The marks made on the two similar pieces, "Untitled (Pink)" and "Luna," were done by scratching away at a thin surface of paint to reveal the earthy linen beneath. The way the smooth, random scribbles cut through the creamy pink of one and the buttery yellow of the other creates a unique satisfaction. That satisfaction has everything to do with disrupting the perfection of those two colors and unearthing the subtle texture of the linen beneath, and with it, the history of the painting's surfaces.

In fact, the result of gathering the seemingly disparate work of these three artists is an incredibly congruous show about the history of each painting's process. It is a striking thing to witness artwork that reveals as delicately as these three have done, the distance an artist must maintain from the work itself in order for it to succeed.

Marty Walker has put up a painting show that highlights the richness of restraint.