

ART LIES

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L. Archie Scott Gobber, *Erect*, 2007; mixed media construction; 100 x 70 inches; courtesy Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas
 R. *I am the Shit (maquette)*, 2007; gouache on paper, enamel on glass and wood; 6 x 23¼ x 8½ inches; courtesy Marty Walker Gallery, Dallas

DALLAS

Archie Scott Gobber
 Marty Walker Gallery

The text-centric work of Archie Scott Gobber seizes innuendo, idioms and down-home braggadocio and makes bold, glaringly sardonic statements out of them. Some of his pieces indict a nation of people not so much bereft of definite opinion but, rather, opinions that actually matter. Others are indicative of the ironies at the root of narcissism as practiced at the grand scale of culture. *I am the Shit (maquette)*, a sculptural model for a large-scale installation piece, reflects the thoughts of someone who has perfected the art of navel-gazing. Presented on a shelf, it is a small, elegant, hand-painted sign that spells out the piece's title. Foreshortening of the words distorts the bravado of the statement, which is made all the more ironic by the diminutive scale. The piece feels somewhat anamorphic, as if intended to be seen at a glance, perhaps while ambling or driving.

The ironies of pandemic egomania are also evident in *Erect*, a carefully skewed construction of recycled signs, a tabletop and shaped canvases. A man's semi-erect prowess might very well be similar to this ad hoc assemblage, which also resembles a distorted city skyline. Causal connections abound. Gobber varies the font on each section of the piece; an "accidental" drip on the lower band of the painting references the long tradition of trompe l'oeil in American painting (think John Peto, William Harnett, Ed Ruscha). In adding this element, Gobber lets us know with a deft hand that he is a painter, and a consummate one at that.

Iran Texas is a seven-foot monochromatic sign with old-fashioned, weatherworn lettering. In just two words, Gobber sets in motion a firestorm of contradictions, evoking two distant places and two distinct

belief systems—or so one might think. The billboard plays on the irony of two cultures that, in their opposition, inevitably circle one another till they meet in a showdown. In this face-off, one place, just like the other—known for its extreme politics and love of oil—is confronted by its mirror image.

Framed in garish, neon-hued green, blue and orange blocks of color, *In Loving Memory of You* is a large painting that could easily double as a billboard-sized lament for a lost loved one. Grey-blue flowers and birds serve as a backdrop for the words, written in hokey cursive lettering. Viewers joked on opening night that the painting paid homage to divorce, but it is more likely that Gobber is making a tongue-in-cheek farewell to the informed viewer. Like the rest of the art in the exhibition, *In Loving Memory of You* bristles with irony, saying one thing yet clearly meaning another. This painting is about the eternal return of the "end" in art: the end of the viewer, of painting. The list goes on, but here we are—at least some of us—still looking and wanting more.

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