

Terry Myers
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Suzanne McClelland
At Paul Kasmin Gallery

Suzanne McClelland's paintings have always had something to say. Whether or not they've always been worth "listening" to is another matter entirely. This is not to suggest, however, that this show of recent, six-foot-square paintings isn't a reasonable sort of breakthrough: not since her all-encompassing and spontaneous – yet also strangely focused – 1992 installations called, simply, "Painting" at the Philip Morris Branch of the Whitney Museum has she been so successful at producing a body of work in which the visual capacities of the paintings are up to the abbreviated suggestiveness of their "personal-as-political" semantic situations.

The base word at play here is "more": there are, for example, pictures named *more*, *anymore*, and *more, more, more*, indicating just how pervasive the term can be in a visual context. It sometimes breaks apart, dances around the surface of a painting (in tiny letters both indiscriminate and promiscuous), and spins around itself (particularly in the "o"s) in denser and denser strokes of charcoal; or, more effectively, stretches itself out to the full height and width of the canvas. Loaded materials often greatly benefit the overall impact here: *more*, in my view the best painting in the show, is covered with profuse scoops of brown modeling clay, positively scatological and victual at the same time. McClelland is at her best when she produces a painting that manages to be filling both with its medium as well as its message, while remaining, in pithy ways, both distasteful and uncompromising.

Regardless of whether or not McClelland has such a thing in mind, I support these paintings even a little bit more, if only because "more" makes me think of *mores*. The best painting being done today embodies some sense of its moral (as opposed to "morality") obligation to produce significant meaning. (This is why McClelland was an appropriate choice for the 1993 Whitney Biennial, even if the paintings didn't look so hot.) With this series, McClelland has demonstrated that she may be well on her way to making some solid paintings.