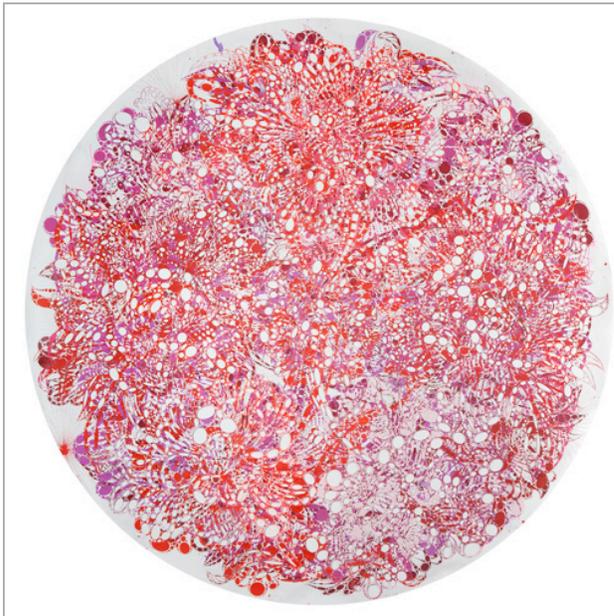


Reed Anderson @ Gregory Lind Gallery

Posted on 17 June 2010



"You Would If You Loved Me", 2010, acrylic and collage on cut paper, 94-inch diameter

For a painter, Reed Anderson is pretty clever with razor blades. His obsessive paper works, which are both additive and subtractive, are distinguished by thousands of small, geometrically shaped holes. These appear in various guises: in hand-cut bits of the paper ground that are removed to form negative shapes; in pieces that are hand-painted and collaged; and in spray painted, stenciled shapes that appear on the same ground from which they were cut.

Anderson's pieces undergo a lot of surgery before they reach completion. In the wall-sized piece, *Nuppet Tree*, the 86" x 90" sheet of paper has not only been cut and punched with patterns of hundreds of holes of various crisp, clean geometric shapes; it has been glued, airbrushed and brush painted, splashed with a drip of gloss medium here and marked in colored pencil there. It is also creased by stenciling actions, marked by scuffs and stains in places, and poked with an array of

thumbtack holes at the corners. This evidence of manhandling brings to mind the presence and gesture of the artist's body so characteristic of action painting; yet Anderson's work appears to be highly nuanced — marked more by the fine motor skills of craft, than by the gross flailing glorified by Pollock or de Kooning.

Bay Area artists such as Val Britton and Queena Hernandez, and Portland-based Anna Fidler use finely cut paper as a distinctive element in their painting. Anderson occupies a similar space, but his work is unique in that it employs paper as both a medium *and* a tool. The cut holes in his flamboyant, biology-inspired works function not only as patterns unto themselves; but also as a stencil for airbrushing patterns onto other parts of his pieces.

Take the show's title piece, *You Would If You Loved Me*. From across a room it reads like a giant doily. This eight-foot circle of paper is cut and punched till there is almost as much paper missing as there is present. Painted in tones ranging from violet to cadmium red, it



"Nuppet Tree", 2009-2010, acrylic, airbrush and collage on cut paper, 84 x 90 inches

delivers, against a white ground, a floral, leafy pattern defined by slices, folds, cuts and airbrushed “paint-throughs”. At close range, unfolds kaleidoscopically, bringing to mind a porous, web-like membrane or the structure of bone marrow. It might also be likened to fractals, except that Anderson claims to have little knowledge of the subject apart from what he gleans from scientific magazines and journals. He is, however, is inspired by the idea of autopoietic systems.

Although fractals are autopoietic, I should score one for my biomorphic interpretation, since the term autopoiesis was coined by biologists to describe living systems that self-propagate, like cells. Better still, leave behind the “what-does-it-look-like” game that seems such an irresistible way to speak about abstraction. Anderson’s work functions beyond a mimesis of any type of imagery. It operates on its own principles, revealing the logic and process of its making.



L to R: "Pinko Salad", 2010, acrylic on cut paper, 29 x 27 inches; "It Was So Romantic...", 2010, acrylic and spray-paint on cut magazine, 10.5 x 8.5 inches

"I enjoy seeing all the history within the materiality of the paper." Anderson explains. "Each crease is a sign of a place or happening...each patch another mark within the complex palimpsest that becomes the finished work." The result has stunning visual texture at close view.

Throughout Anderson’s works, tensions between the obsessive, intentional cuts and the coarsely painted strokes and the incidental rough-ups have a slow-breaking effect. Distinct layers and processes continue to reveal themselves: The positive shapes removed from the holes are re-applied elsewhere as collage materials. Color is painted in thin rims around the edges of some holes but brushed broadly over others, and stenciled through in other places.

Look closely at piece like *Nuppet Tree* and you find even more dimensions unfolding. This "tree" has its own tensions: the marks defining its "branches" — rectangular strips painted in fully saturated primaries, secondaries and solid blacks — couldn’t be more jolting. Against these, the floral clusters of punched-hole patterns seem improbably delicate. The whimsy of the word "Nuppet" suits this picture perfectly.

Elsewhere, several works built from magazine pages (*It Was So Romantic*, *One for Joseph* and others) are less successful, largely because the juxtapositions of text and images against the artist’s marks don’t



"Good for Business 2", 2010, acrylic on paper, 26.75 x 25.75 inches

function as cogently as the marks do alone. The works on plain paper are already rich with layers whose internal tensions are compelling.

Thus, the beauty of Anderson's works lies in how they progressively reveal themselves at different viewing distances. The first of these is the Internet image – how they appear online. Some artists' efforts don't register through a 72 dpi screen image; Anderson's caught my attention even there. From that point, through my first scan of the gallery, to my journey through the distressed topography of each piece, my time was well spent. You can, of course, take the virtual view, but if you really want to understand what Reed Anderson is saying, you must see his work in-person.

–LIESA LIETZKE

Reed Anderson: *You Would If You Loved Me* @ [Gregory Lind Gallery](#), SF, through July 10, 2010.

“Cover”: Detail: *You Would If You Loved Me*