

Carolyn Case

Homemade Tattoo

September 7 - October 14, 2017



Asya Geisberg Gallery is proud to present “Homemade Tattoo”, the second solo painting exhibition of **Carolyn Case**. Moving to a larger scale, the artist confounds expectations of expansiveness by covering discordant ways of painting with a skim of detailed dots, patterned veils, and washes, evoking textile, lace or aboriginal mark-making. Case’s work relies on a beguiling density applied from years of working and reworking a surface, and the constant push and pull of trying to gauge an articulated space out of a selection of suggestions. A leaf or a palm frond, a bisected jug, a coffee cup stain, or notebook paper page might come and go out of the diversity of painting approaches, sneaking in a familiar association of comfort and ubiquity. Each work implies a stunning resolve to erase and redo, coating areas in so many overlapping drips, scrapes, brush marks and dabs. And yet that workmanship interplays with the bravado of mechanical erasure – what took years to produce can be sanded away in mere seconds.

This wistful sincerity and simultaneous playfulness finds a fitting motif in the show’s title, “Homemade Tattoo”. A vision of earnest teenagers trying to carve a message they may soon outgrow confounds the expectation that tattoos are meant to last forever. Where before the dots in Case’s paintings could imply embroidery, doodling, or meditative abstraction, now we see skin itself present as a similar surface for an image constructed of sequential tiny dots. The body becomes a playground for aesthetic overhaul, but unlike a painting, we are only given one chance to get it right.

For Case, sanding acts as a metaphor for starting over and making new choices. The frequent motif of notebook paper acts as a fragile formal device where blue lines create an Agnes-Martin like pattern, as well as a suggestion of trying hard in school to get it right. Upon closer looking, one sees an awkward mirroring– as drips are hand-painted in a Rorschach-like repetition. Case titles her paintings after the myriad of influences of any one seemingly abstract gesture – the colors of her high school, the arrangement of knick-knacks in a home, the porousness of time, and the effort required as daily mundane tasks, repeated over the years, add up to the building of a life. In the bewildering complexity of Case’s paintings, small repeated gestures crescendo towards a hard-fought equilibrium, much as we try to steer our lives, in increments large and small, towards a larger meaning.

Originally from California, Carolyn Case earned her MFA from MICA’s Mount Royal School of Art in Baltimore, MD, and her BFA from California State University in Long Beach, CA. She has shown throughout the Mid-Atlantic area, with solo exhibitions at Loyola University, McLean Projects for the Arts, and the Art Registry in Washington D.C. She has participated in two-person and group exhibitions at the Delaware Museum of Art, Wilmington, DE, A.I.R. Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, The Parlour Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY, Joyce Goldstein Gallery, Chatham, NY, Reynolds Gallery, Richmond, VA, and John Fonda Gallery, Baltimore, MD. Residencies include the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, the School 33 Art Center in Baltimore, the Vermont Studio Center, and the Kanoria Centre for the Arts in Ahmedabad, India. Case’s works have been reviewed in ArtNews, New American Paintings, and the Baltimore Sun, among others. She is a 2017 Bethesda Sondheim Artscape Prize Semi-finalist.



Detail: Homemade Tattoo, 2017
Oil on panel, 42" x 50"



Detail: Bookshelf Safety, 2017
Oil painting, 20" x 20"