

Art in America

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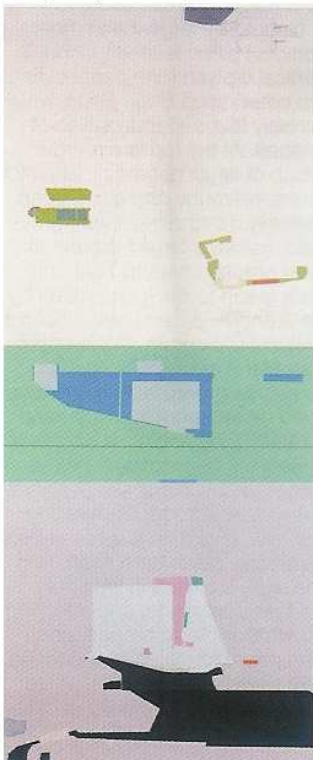
WASHINGTON D.C.

Jason Gubbiotti at Fusebox

Early 20th-century Russian Constructivism supported the belief that a new world order could be based upon esthetic structures. There are qualities in Jason Gubbiotti's abstractions that echo that utilitarian intent, without so simple a hope and with a far more open sense of inquiry. Sure, a 21st-century artist might make paintings about the structure of the world's order, but they'd have to be multivalent, polyformal, and sometimes as foolish and irrational as the real world seems to be. Gubbiotti's paintings satisfy those conditions.

This series, from 2003-04, is titled "New Ways of Living" (also the name of the exhibition, the young artist's second solo show at Fusebox), and the titles of individual pieces likewise present a flat irony: *Popular Mechanics* and *Inferior Mechanics*, *Green Piece*, *Fallow the Leader*. The images

Jason Gubbiotti: *Brain Shop*, 2003-04, oil, tempera and graphite on panel, 84 by 36 by 3 inches; at Fusebox.



they designate are much more richly ambiguous. Sets of geometric shapes painted in attractively unnatural enamel colors, the paintings are composed with horizon lines and often light grounds. They can be imagined as plans for command bunkers visualized from above and below ground, graphs of economic transformations projected over a decade, or perhaps aerial photographs of shopping malls. Gubbiotti is registering visually how power might work: as forms impose themselves on other forms, saliently defining themselves or prevailing over existing circumstances.

Gubbiotti's largest and most complex piece is an 84-inch-tall vertical diptych (one panel over the other) titled *Brain Shop*, which is really four separate suites of images. At the top is a narrow group of small geometric abstract forms in orange and olive green, casually dominating a light gray field; below, a larger, cream-colored ground contains light and dark green forms (punctuated by an orange element) resembling a molecular diagram. In the upper part of the lower panel, a turquoise-green section is dramatized by broken-edged light and dark blue rectangles. It suggests a diagram of an ancient palace and its outbuildings swept partially away by a flood. Dominating the lowest section is a recumbent, sphinxlike black form seen from the side, crowned in light gray and pink polygons, and attended by smaller black, orange, gray and green forms. Why are these four worlds connected, if not to suggest the simultaneity of different public dramas—a recognizably contemporary moment?

Gubbiotti's world mirrors shifting power conditions and circumstances of beauty wherever they may be found. The sense of moral neutrality in his intentionally ambiguous visual metaphors is unsettling, as if he intends to mirror, in imagery, the social vocabulary of our new world.

—J.W. Mahoney