



"UNTITLED," 2014

Alfredo Scaroina

ACRYLIC, OIL, OIL STICK, GESSO, PAPER, DIRT, SPRAY PAINT, FOUND FABRIC, CHARCOAL ON CANVAS
68" x 55"

PHOTO: COURTESY DEBORAH COLTON GALLERY

I can get my hands on," Scaroina says. "Anything in the studio is fair game."

These colorful, densely textured paintings are worked and reworked over an extended period of time. After building up the surface, Scaroina may sand it down several times and apply a new layer of paint and materials. The dominant color may change several times as well. Some of the paintings, such as *It's Never Enough*, suggest an urban wall on which dozens of posters and graffiti have been applied, exposed to the elements, and partially deconstructed over a period of time. Others are pieced together from fragments of older paintings to which the artist adds additional layers, creating a patchwork effect.

There is magic in Scaroina's process and mystery in his results. He draws on a large vocabulary of archetypal symbols and motifs ranging from crosses and geometric shapes to numbers, letters, and other marks. Scaroina also incorporates chance in his creative process by allowing his subconscious to direct his hand as it moves across the canvas. The resulting paintings have elements that suggest abstract expressionism, as well as the work of Twombly, Rothko, Gottlieb, Reinhardt, Rauschenberg, to name a few. Scaroina takes everything in and lets it percolate in his subconscious before unleashing his creative process. It is this process that determines the form and content of the completed paintings.

—DONNA TENNANT

SANTA FE

Gregory Botts:
"The Madrid Group"
at David Richard Gallery

In mountain towns throughout the West, straw-hatted *plein air* painters pull over at scenic vistas or at the base of dramatic mountain-scapes, hatches of their Subarus and SUVs pitched while they interpret land on canvas. The work, which, to borrow a phrase from Matthew Coolidge, amounts to little more than "advertisements for nature," shows up in airports, hotels, and trophy homes—places where a pleasant, agreeable aesthetic are particularly desirable.

Gregory Botts's work, on the other hand, provides a different reading of the public performance that is painting outdoors. Splitting his time between New York City and the former New Mexico mining town of Madrid (now a popular tourist destination), Botts built the collection "The Madrid Group" from works begun at his mountain retreat from about 2000 to 2009. Plenty of other Western artists depict landscape from within an abstract, or even conceptual, framework, but the work of *plein air* artists is so easily associated with tourist-driven fall arts festivals. Botts breaks us from this association by questioning his own romantic notions of landscape. He confronts his own presence as an artist in a scenic, mountainous, tourist town. This is particularly evident in the fragmented pieces, as in the *Blue Hills Fragmented* series and the *Yellow Sky Fragments* series or the works done by memory, as in the *Blue Remembered Hills* series.

However, the series that best articulates his vision falls under the heading *Madrid, Night Studio*. Take, for instance, *Madrid, Night Studio, All One, falling #1* (2004-2008), a large-scale painting in oil and acrylic. What appears to be a full quarter of the canvas is black. Taking up a full length and width, it is cut only by white, five-sided stars like those in an illustration for children. The remaining quarter is filled with abstract overlapping shapes in vivid solid colors. We must stand back from the 115-inch-by-73 3/8-inch image, across the gallery, to appreciate that we are viewing a painting of paintings against the dark sky, as if Botts (a student of Fairfield Porter and Paul Georges) is reconstructing the landscape around his studio from memory, while that very same landscape is obscured by night. He disrupts his own romantic gaze through the process of revealing it. And yet, void of particular dialogues

"MADRID, NIGHT STUDIO, ALL ONE, FALLING #1"
2004-06

Gregory Botts

OIL ON CANVAS, 115" x 73 3/8"

PHOTO: COURTESY DAVID RICHARD GALLERY

on the romanticized West, the work still fits nicely in places where an agreeable aesthetic is desirable.

—MATTHEW IRWIN

CHICAGO

Jeff Carter:
"A Study in Lost Opportunity"
at The Mission
"The Common Citizenship of Forms"
at DePaul Art Museum

It's likely that viewers of Jeff Carter's exhibition at The Mission will find his aesthetic very familiar. The paper-filled particle board, nickel-plated aluminum brackets and birch veneers featured in the sculptures of the Chicago-based artist are immediate signifiers of one of the most accessible and ubiquitous of household brands: IKEA. Employing a process popularly referred to as "IKEA hacking," Carter deconstructs and reconstructs this company's furniture, both highlighting and undermining the compositions and functions of the objects. However, for Carter, IKEA hacking is no end in itself. At the crux of his practice is a regard for modern design and architecture, with IKEA serving as an illustration of this ideology, a counterpoint to it, and a conceptual entry point for the viewer.

In "A Study in Lost Opportunity," Carter's four pieces are based upon a design by German Bauhaus pioneer Walter Gropius with Adolph Meyer that was submitted as a part of Chicago's famous Tribune Tower architecture competition in 1922. The Gropius/Meyer design did not win, and so was never constructed. Here, Carter

