

# Worlds populated, colorful and intimate



Detail of Liliana Porter's "Situation With Levitating Rabbit II" at the Barbara Krakow Gallery.

Liliana Porter's deceptively charming paintings and assemblages at Barbara Krakow Gallery are populated with her trademark tiny figurines, which bring whimsy and certain emotional fortitude to the worlds she creates for them.

Those worlds unfailingly represent art and art theory - questions about surface, gesture, and object. A 1-inch-tall figure, swept up in paint (or sometimes sweeping up paint) becomes a stand-in for the artist and the viewer confronting the world of form and color. Porter deflates art's high-mindedness, but honors its grammar and purpose.

In "To Go There III," a small Mickey Mouse in a little car scoots over an oval canvas. Mickey's slathered in black paint, and he leaves swirling black gestures in his wake, as Porter twists the concept of the artist's hand, made especially sacrosanct by Abstract Expressionism. In "Axe Man (With green shirt)," a little guy stands on a white cube of a shelf. For him, it's a pedestal, which in art-think has its

own host of conceptual tropes. He holds a wee ax above his head, and below, aggressive cuts splinter the white cube.

In this show, unlike others she has had in recent years at Barbara Krakow and at the Boston Center for the Arts, Porter uses large-scale works to explore issues of war and violence. For "Situation With Levitating Rabbit II" she has drawn a smallish supine cartoon rabbit on an expansive canvas. Swipes of white paint drip down to a shelf at the bottom, where a kneeling toy soldier appears to have shot a fallen Mickey Mouse - both covered in white paint. The shelf is otherwise studded with rubble, also sodden with paint. The only thing that's not white along the shelf is the tiny figure of a cleaning woman pushing a broom, corralling the mess.

There is so much at work in this piece. The purity of the white-on-white canvas, save for that eerie bunny rising like a full moon, argues with the implication that paint here becomes a substitute for blood. But then maybe not, because the cleaning

woman belongs in a hallway, not on a battlefield, and these are playthings. Except in an art gallery, they're not. The more realms that collide like this in Porter's work, the more provocative it is.

By Cate McQuaid  
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

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**Liliana Porter**

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,  
10 Newbury St.,  
through April 24th.  
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