

## SCULPTURAL PAINTING



BILL THOMPSON  
 DEVIANT, 2007  
 ACRYLIC URETHANE ON EPOXY BLOCK  
 20 x 24 x 2 INCHES  
 IMAGE COURTESY OF BARBARA  
 KRAKOW GALLERY

Minimalist painter Bill Thompson is also a sensualist. Just look at "Conomo," one of his signature pieces in "Dialects," his show up at Barbara Krakow Gallery. Like Armstrong, Thompson builds up his surface in many layers. But unlike her, Thompson works generally in monochromes, and with automotive paints.

"Conomo" is as much sculpture as painting; the picture plane undulates deliciously, like the rise and fall of the sea, an abstraction of hills, or a woman's body. The paint is pearly aqua blue. The paint itself and the rolling surface drink the light in and toss it playfully back out at you. There's a bewitching tension between surface and depth.

All that "Conomo" embodies sets the bar high for Thompson. There's an element of rapture to it that marries sensual and spiritual. The rest of "Dialects" falls short, not because the paintings are any less rigorous, but because the exhibit presents Thompson's work as a series of intellectual problems he sets out to solve. Where one painting on its own can take your breath away, several begin to read more like dry visual equations. depicts two bigger-than-life naked men whose flesh evidently has been burned raw by the caustic gel used by American forces in the Vietnam War.

For instance, in "BE-AU-TY" Thompson articulates the same curve three times, in white and black. He mounts the three panels one over the next to create a swan's neck arc. It's an artist's version of something a 4-year-old might set up with matching cards.

"Nightfall" is a six-piece grid with three panels on top, two in the middle and one on the bottom. For each lower level, Thompson combines the pigments of the two panels above. There's a certain fascination with the tones, as they move deeper toward black. But where's the sheer delight that we see in a piece such as "Conomo"?

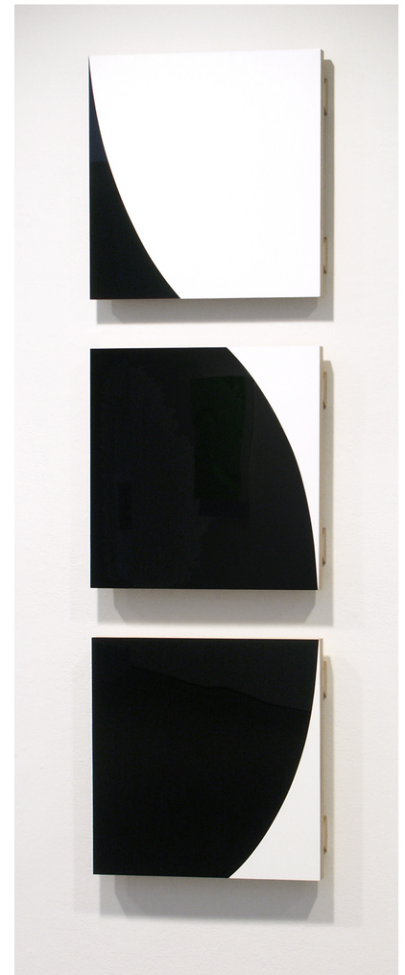
It shows up only here and there. The pink "Deviant" sets two curves, one above the other. The bottom one is a symmetrical bell curve. The one on the top is asymmetrical; the two tense against each other, suggesting a wave surging and receding. The area between bevels inward, like a riverbank. Thompson has painted inside that bank with a glossy finish; outside, it's matte. "Deviant" is a monochrome, but it's hardly just about pink. The piece brims with insinuation in its arcs, its interiority, its sheen. Like "Conomo," it's sexy, busting through the parameters of a painter's intellectual experiment into something far more alluring.

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## Bill Thompson: Dialects

At: Barbara Krakow Gallery,  
 10 Newbury St.,  
 through Jan. 16.  
 617-262-4490,  
 barbarakrakowgallery.com

By Cate McQuaid  
 GLOBE CORRESPONDENT



BILL THOMPSON  
 BE-AU-TY, 2007  
 ACRYLIC URETHANE ON ALUMINUM AND  
 BALTIC BIRCH  
 OVERALL: 51 x 15 x 1 1/2 INCHES  
 EACH ELEMENT: 15 x 15 x 1 1/2 INCHES  
 IMAGE COURTESY OF BARBARA  
 KRAKOW GALLERY

BARBARA

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