

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Cate McQuaid, "Circular take on modernism," *The Boston Globe*, March 6, 2012.

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ART REVIEW

Circular take on modernism

March 06, 2012 | By Cate McQuaid

ANDOVER - Really good artists synthesize all they know about art into something original and new. But history is always looking over their shoulders. Take Carroll Dunham as an example. The painter has, over the years, integrated elements of Abstract Expressionism, Surrealism, and cartoon imagery.



Max, Sam & Edo by Billy Sullivan at the Addison Gallery of American Art... (PENDING ACQUISITION, PARRISH ART MUSEUM)

Dunham has curated "Open Windows: Keltie Ferris, Jackie Saccoccio, Billy Sullivan, and Alexi Worth," at the Addison Gallery of American Art at Phillips Academy, setting four contemporary artists in the context of American modernism. Four galleries circle a central fifth. Each artist has several recent paintings in a satellite gallery, and in the center, Dunham has orchestrated a particularly quirky take on American modernism from the Addison's collection.

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It's a strange show. There's a furtive feeling about the middle gallery, as if we're rooting through dusty and forgotten pieces in somebody's attic. Where are the Pop works that would so fluidly prepare us for Worth's iconographic forms? Where's a Warholian nod to Sullivan's chosen subjects: socialites frolicking in the Hamptons? Why no expressionistic abstractions of the ilk that clearly spawned Saccoccio?

All right, there is a mildly frenetic action painting by Franz Kline on view. Most of the works by better-known artists come across as offbeat, out of sync with what we know of their makers. The four contemporary artists have all mounted paintings that are larger than any of the older paintings - louder and more dramatic. It's almost as if Dunham chose the modernist works so as not to outshine his four protégés.

Allison Kemmerer, the Addison's curator of photography and of art after 1950, shepherded Dunham through the process. He's a Phillips Academy alum, and he had a show of prints here in 2008. Kemmerer told me Dunham had hoped to match Sullivan's sun-drenched, photo-based portraits and still lifes with work by Fairfield Porter, whose realist paintings were clearly an influence. But the Addison doesn't have a Porter in its collection.

Instead, we have an odd Milton Avery, "Artist and Model," (circa 1939) a painting that has more spatial depth, albeit cramped, than we're used to with Avery, and less tonal pop. It's typically formal, a jumbled assortment of planes, with a nude in the foreground leaning her head on her knee.