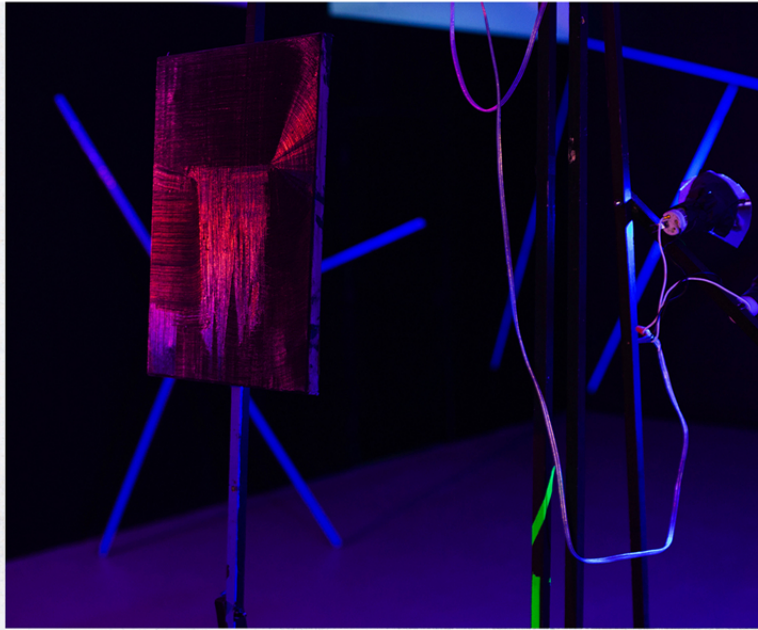


artillery

KILLER TEXT ON ART



Eli Langer, *Graded Defacement Displacement/Three Point Lamp 1*, 2012

ELI LANGER WHARTON + ESPINOSA

BY CAROL CHEH

ELI LANGER'S RECENT SOLO SHOW IS AN ENCHANTING LANDSCAPE of nocturnal emissions and conversations. Seemingly crafted out of countless late nights spent in furtive dialogue with self, nature and others, the show offers suggestions of urban influences and psychological musings that beautifully coalesce into a hypnotic inner world. Initially pleasing on a formal level, Langer's installation becomes more intimately engaging as one spends time sitting in its presence and letting it unfold.

The exhibition offers a variety of complementary insights into the artist's current practice. Langer has said that he is a "mixed-media artist trapped in a painter's body," and in this show we can often see a painterly impulse manifesting itself in his composition of objects. The large and immersive rear room of the gallery is painted entirely in black and harbors a collection of assemblages and wall hangings with partially reflective surfaces lit by fluorescent light bulbs. A sense of nighttime and the visions that emerge from it are intriguingly captured here. In one corner are two slow exposure photographs, *Influential Moon I* and *II* (2012), in which the moon seems to eerily float like a sea anemone. Throughout the room are thin wooden sculptures, reflective panels and light arrangements that are at once highly abstract and slyly suggestive of painter's easels, Hollywood film sets and nightclub sound systems.

Langer's "Waves and Particles" (2011) paintings—small, heavily textured, monochromatic abstractions—neatly assimilate into these arrangements. Two of them taped to the wall at an angle mimic windows or doors. Street culture, salvaged junk, the seediness of Hollywood and its aspirations toward glamour can all be detected here, perhaps constantly simmering within the consciousness of the artist, who does in fact live in Hollywood and has been known to scavenge his artmaking materials from dumpsters and the occasional altruistic Scientologist.

One wall of a narrower space in the gallery is filled with untitled drawings, which look like stream-of-consciousness doodles done during extended phone chats. These are not so much intimate as meandering and elliptical, snaking through such considerations as aggression, loneliness, innocence, drugs, community, women, energy and Mike Kelley. The words, filled with frenetic energy, sometimes form pictures that spill off the page. Nearby, a collection of small, untitled clay pieces record imprints of the artist's hands and face, as if to capture his gestures in a more elemental form.

The front room of the gallery juxtaposes large, close-up photographs of tree bark from the "White Pine" series (2010) with small, tight abstract paintings, seeming to offer a dialog between the natural and the man-made. Gently placed in front of this dialog is another moon motif in the form of two neon light circles and *Step Up* (2012), a rectangular wooden sculpture that acts as a framing device.

Filled with monkishness, elegance, a yearning for communication and a certain street sensibility, the Canadian-born Langer's work is in a charmingly decrepit state of perpetual becoming, hopeful and alarming all at once, just like the city he has lived and worked in for more than ten years.