

“The titles, which complete the work, are lifted from the encyclopedia of misery.”

Lisa Buck, The Downtown Gazette

WL SMITH
mixed media on canvas

Rebecca Schoenkopf The OC Weekly

"*Trial by Fire* is probably the most interesting piece. Against a coppery background, small twigs bar the small window and form a prison cell as the nub of a burnt candle drips wax down the face of the work. I'm always happy to see some good paeans to Joan of Arc."



"*Dying on the Vine* features a split-pea green facade with a baby's wooden block in the window. It might be manipulative; it might be smaltzy. All I know is, thinking about it later, I wanted to cry. Of course, without the title, it would be merely inscrutable."

"Smith's work undercuts the severe look of minimalism with the inclusion of objects like a single domino in a small recession off-centered on a canvas. Donald Judd meets Joseph Cornell."

"Like a polite but rambunctious child, the work in this show wants to do something more than pretend to be well-behaved, cultured and proper."

James Scarborough, 'Uncooperative Abstraction'
at The Project Box in association with ArtWeek.

Cassandra, in Greek mythology, daughter of King Priam and Queen Hecuba of Troy. The god Apollo, who loved Cassandra, granted her the gift of prophecy, but when she refused to return his love, Apollo made the gift useless by decreeing that no one would believe her predictions. Cassandra warned the Trojans of many dangers, including the wooden horse by which the Greeks entered the city, but she was dismissed as a madwoman. After the fall of Troy, she was dragged from her sanctuary in the temple of the goddess Athena by Ajax the Lesser and brought to the Greek camp. When the spoils were divided, Cassandra was awarded to King Agamemnon as his slave and mistress. Cassandra warned him that he would be killed if he returned to Greece; again she was not believed. Upon their arrival in Mycenae she and Agamemnon were murdered by Clytemnestra, queen of Mycenae and wife of Agamemnon.

Cassandra. 2000.
Antique fuse box, 18 dominos, rusted pruning shears, toy dart, plaster, wax, and tempera on canvas. 36"x25"



Melancholic 'Hindsight' Shows Surprising Insight at Portfolio

Lisa Buck, The Downtown Gazette

"The title of the exhibition is itself melancholic: '*Hindsight*' meaning 'I figured it out too late', is a solo exhibition by WL Smith at Portfolio Gallery. At first glance a show of tidy minimalist abstractions that proclaim their own objecthood with a brash attention to surface and substance, the work soon reveals its quiet sorrow.

My favorite pieces are those into which is cut a neat, rectangular niche. Into the niche Smith parks a small dead object of little importance.

Benign Neglect, the color of grimy terracotta, hosts an old, corroded sprinkler head that stares at the viewer with a mute ineffectiveness.

The canvases, if that's what they are, have the thickness and weight of a chunk of wall. They are tough, heavy and hard, like rock or cement, an impression Smith creates by building up the surface with impasto, glazes and pigments.



The titles which complete the work, are lifted from the encyclopedia of misery. It is not the kind of suffering that yells out in agony, however, but the dull ache of eternal damnation.



Like *Triage* and *Judgment and Ignorance*, they describe the underbelly of the human condition.

Trial by Fire is as grim as a life sentence in a forgotten dungeon. Colored the brown of rain-soaked rock, the painting encloses an extinguished candle behind a rusted fence. Little drips of wax dribble from the cell, lending an element of pathos to this metaphor for resignation.

Looking like a slab of smog-corroded marble, *Compromise* houses an old high-intensity light bulb and is wrapped in barbed wire. Where the barbs touch the surface, there are little red gashes that look like wounds. Bleeding rock in bondage. I love it.

Despite the tone of gloom and woe conveyed by Smith's work, there is a touch of cheer in their physical appeal. They are really, very nice paintings. This is art that keeps on giving."

"I haven't seen Smith's work yet, but it sounds like a Jumpstart on the caffeinated art scale - you'll need a four-shot just to keep from sobbing out loud or curling up fetal on the couch."

Inigo Jones, The 'Catalyst'. Caffeinated Art.

WL SMITH
mixed media on canvas

"Smith's career deals with the subjective context of perception, as with these small staged constructs and their presentation of the found object."

"Smith suggests that there is more to perception - than to have simply perceived."

Mark Sasway

'Alternative Perception' At Portfolio.

Monochromatic Message

Shirle Gottlieb,
Long Beach Press Telegram

"Conceptual in content, these monochromatic paintings all feature highly textured surfaces that are achieved from a mixture of plaster, acrylic, and polymer. Smith then embeds found objects directly into the matrix, or places them in recessed apertures that act as miniature stages."

"Though all the work is intriguing from a conceptual point of view, people will get different inferences or meanings depending on how they relate to it. That is exactly Smith's intention."

"Are Smith's paintings really art? In our amorphous post-modern world where culture, economy, politics and aesthetics all cry for your attention - the answer is a resounding 'yes!'"

Purgatory

By Emily Bumgarner

A class paper by a twenty-two year old sociology major who contacted the artist with a copyright use request for a class paper.

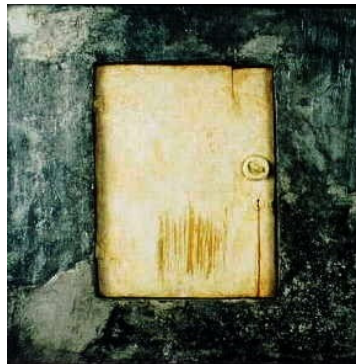
When people walk through an art gallery they usually pick out a piece that for one reason or another catches their eye. Very few people stop to figure out what each detail means. The buyer would be surprised if they took it for more than face value. An artist expresses a point of view and feelings in everything they make. It can be a dream to see the ocean or a political statement. The point of the picture may be as simple as the title or it could be found in the last brush stroke. The artist wants to communicate with a large number of people at once and there is no better way than mass media. By just figuring out the meaning of the title, one has started the climb into the artist's mind.

Purgatory is the postponement of heaven while suffering is inflicted to forgive sins. The New Catholic Encyclopedia acknowledges: "In the final analysis, the catholic doctrine on purgatory is based on tradition, not sacred scripture." This temporal punishment is for those who died in grace but are not free yet from all imperfection. To those of us who are not without sin, the traditional belief of purgatory may act as a comfort when looking at the alternative, hell. In 1991, WL Smith created "*Purgatory*" using tangible items to interpret the doctrine. The artist uses this creation to challenge the definition and creators of purgatory.

Blood catches my eyes, then scratch marks upon the door. Chills hit my spine as I feel the pain and suffering in the piece. The key hole locks the vault and the occupants within. All humans are imperfect and only one, Jesus, was free from sin. With that fact in mind most of mankind would be in purgatory.

What is so comforting knowing that I will work hard all of my life to be the best person possible and still have to suffer? It doesn't make much sense. Behind that door the living don't know what happens. By the looks of the blood from the dripping key hole it is not pleasant.

Adding a bit of history, Jesus died as a ransom sacrifice for all mankind. It is through him that our sins are forgiven. (With nails driven into his body, being beat and tortured to his death, so that mankind would be free from such punishment) The mere suggestion of purgatory degrades his sacrifice. The ludicrousness of this idea helps support of purgatory as Mr. Smith's definition.



The traditional teaching is also out dated and a very old way of thinking. Knowing that Mr. Smith is some what of an activist the thought of a bunch of old men sitting around thinking up another way to control people is probably what moved him in choosing his materials. He chose an antique key plate. One reason for that choice might have been that that was what was available at the time. A more logical reason would be to express a point. Why should people be frightened into a life that some old stuffed shirt dictated to people so long ago that the idea is more antique than the key plate? The answer; we should dictate our lives

our lives, not doctrines invented in the imaginations of control freaks.

Another outstanding use of materials is demonstrated with the use of plaster, acrylic, and tempera on canvas. Mr. Smith combined these items to make the cement box. Cement last for decades and if an animal were to die in it, its imprint could be preserved, as happened with the idea of purgatory. No where in the Bible is purgatory mentioned, a fact the Catholic Church recognizes. But it is continued to be taught because of tradition, also known as a fossil being stuck in cement. Once cement is set it can't be changed, maybe that is what is meant by being stuck in your ways, purgatory is a perfect example.

The scratches on the door mean more than the obvious pain of souls in purgatory. They are the wanting out of tradition. The artist himself is an activist, he along with others continue fighting old ways to breed new ways. Society and tradition change with every voice just as the scratches have warped the door and changed it. Eventually purgatory won't be taught. Not because men have lost.

"I'd hang one of his pieces in my home. Especially the one where the little locked door, so intriguingly bloodied, makes one want to open it - and go inside."

George Metivier, The Missing Link.
'Alternative Perception'.

"You are already Inside"
Linda Yoon, Darks Art Parlour.
'Unveiled'.