

Britt, Douglas, "Shaun O'Dell, 'Skin Freak' Exhibits Usher In New Chapter for Inman Gallery, HOUSTON CHRONICLE, 3 June 2011.

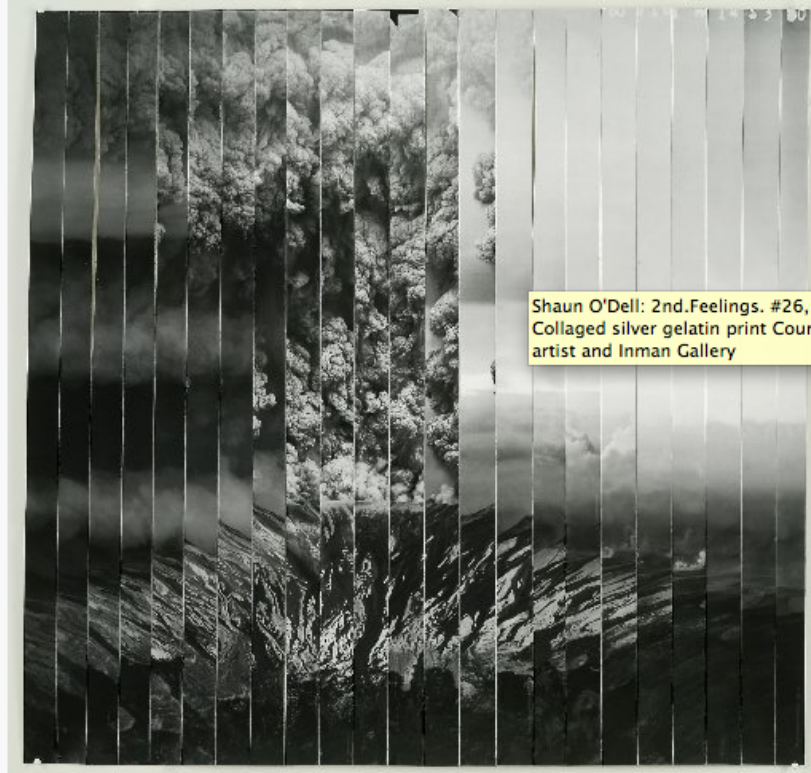


ART

SHAUN O'DELL, 'SKIN FREAK' EXHIBITS USHER IN NEW CHAPTER FOR INMAN GALLERY

DOUGLAS BRITT AT 4:33 PM ON JUNE 3, 2011

Inman Gallery, the original tenant of what has become a cluster of rock-solid contemporary art galleries in Midtown's Isabella Court, is at the high-water mark of its physical reach.



Shaun O'Dell: 2nd Feelings. #26, 2011
Collaged silver gelatin print Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery

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Forced to renovate after a nearby drilling mishap flooded the space with mud, Inman Gallery has reopened with greatly expanded quarters thanks to an agreement with neighboring Bryan Miller Gallery. But for a few more weeks Inman also still has the space at the opposite end of the building, which it has used to mount additional exhibitions, including some of its most ambitious shows. Owner Kerry Inman and director Patrick Reynolds are celebrating their maximum-square-footage moment with two bang-up shows.

San Francisco-based artist Shaun O'Dell reopens Inman Gallery with *Feeling Easy Feelings*, a sprawling exhibit of apparently disparate works that share a process of construction via creative destruction — an apt choice to inaugurate an expansive new space born out of a traumatic event.

The show's prologue is a wall graphite drawing titled *Describe in one sentence a moment in your life when you experienced a radical change in the way you think about things*. The responses, which O'Dell solicited from friends, are dated and make up the text that fills the wall in graduated tones that vary according to the hardness of the pencil lead. (The lettering is darkest for answers at the drawing's bottom and top, where O'Dell used the softest lead, and lightest about two-thirds of the way up, where the lead was hardest.)

They range from a description of a 1959 encounter with an Arshile Gorky painting that made the writer "sick to my stomach, dizzy and nauseated, and I knew at that moment that I wanted a life as a painter," to this: "Summer, 1997: Vomiting in an empty 32oz styrofoam Mr. Pibb container immediately after mainlining a 4mg dilaudid mixed with 1/2g of cocaine." (Dilaudid is a prescription pain reliever.)

A jazz saxophonist, O'Dell fills another gallery with a beautiful selection of collaged-paper drawings created by cutting up "finished" drawings and reorganizing the pieces in a process informed by musical improvisation. Sometimes the results are pictographic and hint at a symbolic language, the logic of which the viewer can intuit put not necessarily decipher.

In other collages, the color combinations and repetitive patterns call to mind a range of associations from Australian Aboriginal painting to Carlos Cruz-Diez' early experiments with hand-cut and hand-painted wood and cardboard pieces. (The latter on are view through July 4 in Cruz-Diez' Museum of Fine Arts, Houston retrospective.)

In the third room, O'Dell sets an aluminum-leaf wall drawing with a silver-leaf horizon line opposite a collage made similarly to the works in the previous room, but using a photo of the 1980 Mount St. Helens eruption as its starting point. O'Dell has cut and reassembled the image of a natural disaster to make it look man-made; the volcano now resembles a bomb crater.

Between the bomb collage and the silvery, wall-size nocturne is the show's title work, a sculpture in which a brass rod, rising from the floor, appears to form an arc that cuts through two stones — one marble, one limestone — that sit atop a slab of Ponderosa pine, which in turn sits on a pedestal.



Shaun O'Dell's *Feeling Easy Feelings*, foreground, and *Silver Wall*. Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery

On closer inspection, there are not one but two brass rods, one of which terminates as it "enters" the marble stone, the other of which seemingly originates out of the limestone. The apparent arc is a continuity born out of discontinuities akin to those in O'Dell's collages and the text drawing. Sanctuary-like but not escapist, the room is a triumphant culmination to a sweeping show.



Darcy Huebler, *Openwork*, 2004. Courtesy of the artist and Inman Gallery

Skin Freak, now at Inman Annex, appeared at Texas Christian University's Fort Worth Contemporary in 2010 and features abstract paintings by Edith Baumann, Darcy Huebler, Aaron Parazette and John Pomara.

"Distinguished by their unique 'skins,' each painting ... rewards careful scrutiny, but do not expect to discover the artist," curator Frances Colquitt writes of the painters' non-expressionistic practices.

Like O'Dell's collages, Baumann's paintings draw inspiration from jazz but are more austere.

Parazette's vibrant hard-edged paintings on shaped canvases leave no trace of his hand. Pomara's icy paintings on aluminum have a lightness that plays

off the weightiness of Darcy Huebler's colorful plywood paintings.

Skin Freaks marks a satisfying conclusion to Inman Annex's run in a space that will soon be filled by Devin Borden Gallery, while O'Dell's show announces a triumphant start to Inman Gallery's next phase.

SHAUN O'DELL: FEELING EASY FEELINGS

When: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through July 2

Where: Inman Gallery, 3901 Main; 713-526-7800

SKIN FREAK

When: 11 a.m.-6 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, through June 25

Where: Inman Annex, 3917 Main; 713-526-7800

Closing reception: Featuring gallery talk with the artists and curator, 4 p.m. June 25