

**NEW YORK**

**Eli Ping**

**Susan Inglett Gallery**

The works in Eli Ping's recent exhibition continue his exploration of the dynamic interplay between painting and sculpture and challenge our perceptual understanding of both. In a nod to Ping's process-oriented making, the show consisted of six large relief pieces that progressively moved from worked planar surfaces to meticulously crafted, three-dimensional forms. Throughout, Ping relies on molding, gouging, hammering, and layering to achieve an understated but kinetically elegant effect that defies his use of pared-down materials such as canvas, acrylic paint, wax, and supports.

Diamond- and rectilinear-shaped works such as *Hardly Softly*, *Morning Glory*, and *Indian Duck* resonate with



TOP: SCOTT CHENING / BOTTOM: COURTESY SUSAN INGLETT GALLERY, NY



an internal animism and fascinate in their ability to capture a sense of the not-quite-familiar. Composed of an oil-slick rainbow palette applied to twisted, molded canvas ribbons, they present undulating rhythms (*Hardly Softly*, *Morning Glory*) or peaked points (*Indian Duck*) that refer to the ephemeral surface textures characteristic of transitional, mixed-use environments straddling the man-made and the natural. These works push the low-tech aesthetic of the inky black, freestanding figurines *Bile Means 4* (2007) and *Bile Means 2* (2007), which resemble sinister, gargoyle-like forms suspended in a frozen state. Like these earlier works, which use broken ceramic and resin to simulate cast metal, Ping's recent sculptures transform one material into the look of another, this time achieving a brooding but colorful surface luster. In combination with pliable compositions and a scale keyed to the human form, their exterior treatment fuses the power of John

Chamberlain's raw macho aesthetic with Lynda Benglis's fluid, anatomically suggestive forms.

The paired works from Ping's "Untitled" series, with their folded kimono-like shapes and mottled, dusky surfaces, possess a meditative quality while commenting on the shifting nature of everyday existence. Their two sides—one surface opaque and the other heavily splattered with paint—are displayed as reverse images, thereby allowing the viewer to register instantly the form's gestalt. They evoke the same "monastic quietism" that Barbara Rose refers to in her discussion of "ABC Art" from 1965, linking Minimalist sensibility and silent contemplation. Though Ping's works initially refuse narrative, further looking reveals that their splattered matte surfaces, covered with imprinted footprint traces, convey an ineffable lingering presence. In this way, Ping poetically shares with us his workman-like process through allusions to absence.

—Robin Reisenfeld