

REVIEWS

Los Angeles Area

STEVE HURD

Rosamund Felsen Gallery

Painting has had a rough time finding its footing over the past few decades, and whether you're a true believer in brushstrokes and liquid lines or prefer to dance to a more digitized beat, Steve Hurd's version of the media is cause for pause—a suitable descriptor for this trickster with a brush. Hurd's particular universe will magnetize both

entertainment and news that increasingly, if disturbingly, marks our place in history even as it's being formed, infuses each of the paintings in the show and none more clearly than this one. Two figures, hefting white rectangles, move across a dripping landscape of green grass, white building, grey road, towards a third figure leaning against what is presumably the get-away car. But for the dark smudge of a mask on one figure's face, which could easily be taken for a shadow, the scene is a rainy moving day, maybe from city to suburb (or vice versa). International art theft appears as oddly commonplace as a newspaper thrown on the stoop or reviewed in an inbox.

Two of the most moving images in the exhibition, *Untitled (RIP series) 1* and *Untitled (RIP series) 2*, portray soldiers carrying flag-draped coffins. The images are loosely formed through a collection of brushstrokes that are at once exaggerated pixels and expressionistic lines. Hurd often uses images from newspapers and the Internet as source material, playfully exposing and blurring boundaries in painting and photography across his canvases. But the approach

takes a more somber and emotional tone in this series; image and application coalesce in a poignant homage. Hurd says that he did these when Bush was elected for the second time and, as the war rages in Iraq, the paintings shift from reaction to prediction to pained reflection on gallery walls.

A new group of works, *Untitled (Outburst series)*, began as frenetic doodles that were then scanned and edited in a computer. The end result of each is a painting of a digital image of a drawing, a peculiar abstraction with echoes of the heyday of painterly heroism and portents of its digital eclipse. *Untitled (Outburst series) 5*, is a flower or sunburst composed of interlocking circles of white, black, blue, and bits of yellow and red that pulls—like so many of Hurd's canvases—a vivid history of image-making including drawing and painting, three-color printing and digital imagery, into its multi-layered orbit.

—Annie Buckley



Steve Hurd, *Untitled (R.I.P. series) 2, 2004*

audiences with its drips and blotches, pixelated remains and photographic sources. From childhood photos to digitized doodles, uniformed soldiers to a drippy letter of termination, the subjects are, to borrow an adjective from the press release, eclectic. But Hurd's unified approach to the canvas brings disparate topics together in a way that relates to 18th century painters moving with virtuosity between architecture, mythology and portraiture as easily as it does the democratic catch-all of the Internet. Splotches and dots vie for attention with the forms that pulse and shimmer among them.

Oslo is an image from a dream as much as the event that inspired it (the theft of two paintings, including *The Scream*, from the Munch Museum in Oslo in 2005) could just as soon be a scene in a Hollywood movie, and likely that opportunity will come. The sometimes not so subtle blur between event and photographic image, dream and reality,

artillery

