

Jonathan VanDyke

SCARAMOUCHE

Scaramouche's cramped storefront space at 53 Stanton Street is difficult to negotiate at the best of times, but Jonathan VanDyke's exhibition "The Hole in the Palm of Your Hand" made an easy passage even more challenging than usual. While the five constructions in the show seemed at first well behaved, a closer look at each one—and a quick glance beneath it—revealed a substantially messier side. *Asymmetrical Relationship* (all works 2009) is typical of the set. It is a large, black, boxlike form resembling a skewed letter I, whose closely woven fabric surface is punctuated by two plastic orifices. Dribbles of gelatinous paint ooze slowly but continually from each of these openings, leaving striated multicolored trails that trickle down to the work's lower section and form psychedelic pools on the floor.

That the floor itself—"tiled" in sheets of dull brown board—is also a creation of VanDyke's augments the impression of a subtly holistic approach (the press release characterizes the gallery as a "container" rather than simply as a room). The artist has not only spoken repeatedly of the significance of "rupture" to his practice, but demonstrates that the idea is meaningful only in context. To this end, he strives to exercise a degree of control over that context—physically and, by extension, conceptually. The physical break in the sculptures here is clear—they have holes that bleed. The rupture in the objects' environment is less plain—a newcomer to the space would assume that the floor had always been there. And the rupture in the viewer's comprehension is, appropriately, more elusive still but also productively multifaceted. The press release roots it explicitly in queer theory via allusion to writer Sarah Ahmed's notion of "shifting grounds," but the rainbow hues of those puddles of paint surely mark more than just sexual identity.

Of the other works, *The Disappearing Core* is a kind of backless closet made from Peg-Board in which slender metal chains strung from the top of the interior to its base are gradually enveloped in paint. *Insatiable Horizon* is a wood-framed box with a woven surface, similar to that of *Asymmetrical Relationship*, which boasts two side panels extending outward toward the viewer and pierced by a single paint-conducting white pipe. These and other works in "The Hole . . ." are clearly indebted to modernism in general and Minimalism in particular, though most suggest battered pieces of IKEA furniture as much as they do Donald Judd boxes. The gallery proposes Donald Moffett, Frank Moore, and "fiber modernist" Claire Zeisler as additional inspirations; one might also cite such better-known precursors as Lynda Benglis, Eva Hesse, and even Matthew Barney.

The show's obvious bodily allusions are underscored by the finely judged juxtaposition of concealment and exposure, and by efforts at outward polish that are tragically and hilariously stymied by the always embarrassing chaos of internal actuality. But the artist seems to have a broader set of concerns that are rooted firmly in the formal. In *Brief History of Desire*, a glass of water sits on a shelf in an open-fronted wooden cabinet. VanDyke's special sauce makes its inexorable way through a grid of holes above and dribbles onto the shelf slightly to the left of it. The resultant contrast is at once awkward, lovely, and—of all things—painterly. A solitary photograph, which shares its title with the show, hung on its own in the back office but was visible through the door. Depicting a paint-filled glove, it acted as a kind of nonverbal signature, a tongue-in-cheek acknowledgment of the artist's role as part originator of these splendidly discordant experiments.

—Michael Wilson

Jonathan VanDyke, *Asymmetrical Relationship*, 2009, cedar, webbing, cast plastic, paint, 68½ x 83 x 5½".

