

Arts Review [CLICK TO ENLARGE](#)



Painting by Heyd Fontenot

2007 Texas Biennial, Okay Mountain

Okay Mountain, through April 15

(Because of the significance and scope of the Texas Biennial, which is statewide in reach and spread across four Austin galleries, the *Chronicle's* visual-arts writers chose to review the exhibit collectively, in a dialogue. They will cover each gallery separately. The first review, of the works in the Buttridge Gallery at the Dougherty Arts Center, appeared in the *Chronicle's* March 30 issue. The review of the exhibition at Site 1808 is also in this issue.)

Salvador Castillo: There was a different attitude at this space. It was definitely brighter [than the Buttridge Gallery at the Dougherty Arts Center]. Not just the lighting, but the works. Lots of color. Maybe I'm projecting, but I felt a more communal character here as well. The repeated circular forms of Virginia Fleck, Linda Pace, and Candace Briceño cheerily anchored the colorful works of Peat Duggins, Baseera Kahn, and Jeffery Dell. Linda Pace's centerpiece both focused and reflected the circular installation. This space also had the most Austin artists, thus making the works look very familiar.

Except for Jeffrey Dell. That guy is like a chameleon. Every time I see his work, it is completely alien. The big print in “22 to Watch,” then impastolike screenprints at D Berman, and now these colorful wriggly organisms.

Amanda Douberley: Virginia Fleck’s plastic-bag mandala was a highlight of the Biennial. Deliberate placement of reused images and a stimulating sense of texture – plus a work at the right size for Okay Mountain’s gallery space (big but not overtaking an entire wall) – left me engrossed and, in consequence, with a better understanding of what was missing from some of the work at the DAC: Fleck’s piece is good, but it was also the right work for the show. I didn’t have that sense of wanting more, of feeling like I needed something else to get a substantial introduction to the artist. For me, last week’s question about how many pieces we need to see by each artist in the Biennial is moot. It’s not a quantitative but a qualitative issue.

The Biennial context is also making me question my response to Linda Pace’s mirrored igloo. Quite literally the centerpiece at Okay Mountain, the glittering sculpture’s inherent interactivity (you can crawl inside) and playful disco-ball reflections made it a success within this show; however, I’m not sure I would feel the same way were it a stand-alone installation. Over the past 10 years, there’s been a lot of talk about “festivalism” in relation to artworks made for international biennials; do we see this phenomenon manifesting itself here?

Nikki Moore: Amanda, I think something more profound than festivalism was at play in Linda Pace’s work. For me, that piece was brilliant – all puns intended. All of us who looked at it, passed by it, crawled in and out of it, were left with and given nothing more than a broken and refracted reflection of ourselves. As nothing more than what is projected onto it, I think Pace’s work is the art object par excellence. It is also a powerful statement about the complex role of art exhibitions – as communal navel-gazings at their worst, and as cultural reflections at their best – though I’m not sure that is their only potential. As a quotation of Niki de St. Phalle’s larger-than-life mirrored works, however, Pace’s project raises another issue that has become poignant for me in this Biennial. In academia, you’d call it something like footnoting or acknowledging your sources. I’m not sure what it is called in the art world, but as so many pieces in the Biennial, including the catalog cover, are a new makeover of already existing ideas, it is scandalous and offensive not to make some nod to sources and inspiration.