

Art and about: The hidden interest of banality

by John Isaacs



As a well-versed and prestigious art critic, Walter Robinson knows a good painter when he sees one. He's also, unusually, one himself.

His current show at Hudson's Jeff Bailey Gallery casts an acute lens, in and out of focus, on quotidian objects—donuts, liquor bottles, pain relievers, patterned shirts, sandwiches, and sexy women—to yield images of considerable dexterity.

Banal though his subject matter may be, Robinson's vivid palette and signmaker's stylistic bravado, applied to small-scale canvasses, is also surprisingly interesting in its effervescence and elusiveness.

The original masters of this genre—a branch of Pop Art—are, of course, Wayne Thiebaud and Andy Warhol, but Robinson's sketchy technique is less labored (think the transition in nineteenth century French painting from Delacroix to Manet) and as refreshing in its way as a gin and tonic.

Delightfully wacky, Catskill-based Dylan Languell's accompanying little monsters (Dubuffet meets John Chamberlain under a microscope) perched on stacks of tires are, typically for Jeff Bailey, both idiosyncratic and provocative, though hardly as tasty.

Thru August 7 at Jeff Bailey Gallery, 127 Warren Street