

Jackie Gendel at Jeff Bailey

Jackie Gendel is a young painter who finds ways of combining an arch attitude with forthright paint handling. She is already a veteran of a number of group and solo exhibitions. Several years back she was making ink and wax paintings that imitated engravings and demonstrated a flair for cartoonish narrative. Then, in "Hunch & Flail," a group exhibition that Amy Sillman curated at New York's Artists Space the summer before last, Gendel exhibited paintings that had veered from the earlier figuration into an investigation of material-oriented abstraction.

Consequently, one cannot help but view the works in Gendel's most recent exhibition as the latest synthesis in this painter's progress. The 2005-06 paintings, all vertical rectangles between 20 and 40 inches in height, use the convention of the portrait as a theme on which to improvise. Among the works, one discerns allusions to early American three-quarter profiles, Picasso's somber Cubistic likenesses of Dora Maar and the kind of parodistic Victorian illustration perfected by Edward Gorey, along with feints toward Marie Laurencin, Alex Katz and the contemporary illustrator Maira Kalman.

Gendel revises with impunity, thanks to her employment of very liquid oil paint. Some of the brighter faces seem to have been formed out of a puddle when the canvas was worked on in a horizontal position. For example, *Ms. A.W. Jackson* (2005), an oil-on-canvas-over-panel work that began as a copy of a portrait of President Andrew Jackson, has a head of milky peach that leaks out into the surrounding fields of brushmarks. Gently applied brown chiaroscuro dabs that limn the subject's features appear to have been introduced while this overall face color was still wet.

Several paintings, including *The Thinker*, a 22-inch-square panel from 2005, are resolved by partially wiping out the subject's painted visage with large brushstrokes, perhaps from frustration over not achieving a likeness. Gendel also piles faces one on top of the other.

In general, Gendel is fairly fearless once

she sets up her parameters. Like de Kooning, she has a fondness for flesh, for underpainting that activates the foreground and for virtuosic featherings of paint that jostle with earthy scraped passages. Gendel's talent for pastiche brings new life to these familiar moves. She also has an undemonstrative but very solid ability to draw and a talent for keeping dirty paint full of good color. This is great stuff. I wonder what she'll do next.

—Joe Fyfe

Jackie Gendel: *Ms. A.W. Jackson*; 2005, oil on canvas over panel, 24 by 20 inches; at Jeff Bailey.

