

## Greg Bogin at Leo Koenig

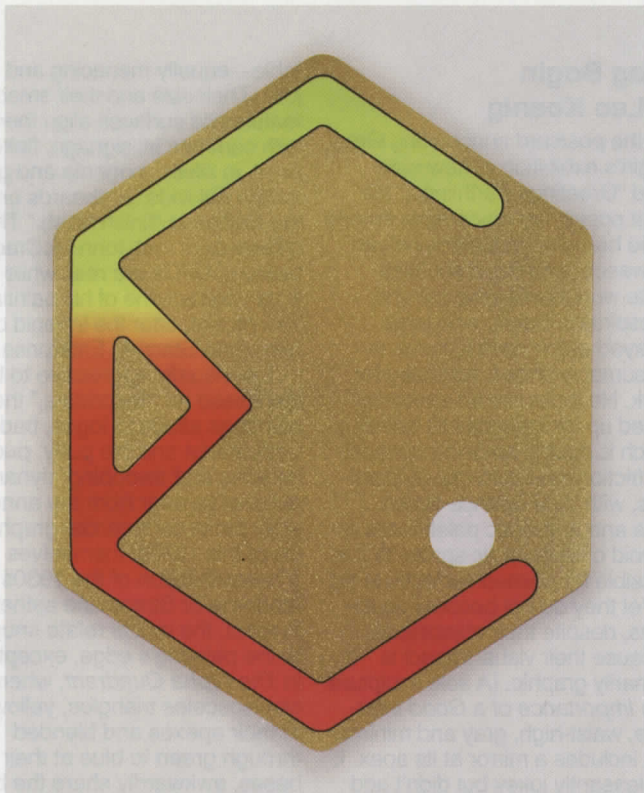
On the postcard announcing Greg Bogin's exhibition of new work, titled "Greetings Earthlings," the artist poses, hands on hips, among three brand-new, squeaky-clean canvases, wearing a spotless white workman's jumpsuit and a respirator. Bogin, who uses sprayed automobile lacquer, is presumably shown equipped for work. He looks like an astronaut suited up for intergalactic travel, which is doubly amusing because his frictionless, zero-gravity paintings, with their science-fiction titles and antiseptic palette, are as devoid of illusionistic space as it is possible for painted surfaces to be.

Yet they do not become sculptures, despite their objecthood, because their visual impact is primarily graphic. (A sole sculpture, *The Importance of a Good Interface*, waist-high, gray and minimalish, includes a mirror at its apex. It is pleasantly jokey but didn't add much to the show.) The paintings shown on the postcard are roughly 7 by 5 feet. They could be insignia of futuristic corporations, or universal symbols for products or processes that have yet to be invented. They are inscru-

table—equally menacing and jolly. Their size and their smooth, featureless surfaces align them with commercial signage; flake paint, in silver, magenta and gold, recalls hot rods, surfboards and the California "finish fetish." The difference is that John McCracken believes UFOs are real, while Bogin names one of his paintings *The Picard*, after the intrepid captain of the Starship Enterprise.

Too visually aggressive to be dismissed as "decorative," the paintings allude to logos, badges, trademarks and the puffy, pudgy lettering and swooping, dynamic accents familiar from the annoyingly perky commercial graphics of the 1970s, themselves a bastardization of the 1930s Moderne or Streamline esthetic. In most, the motifs relate snugly to the painting's edge, except in *The Alpha Quadrant*, where two isosceles triangles, yellow at their apexes and blended through green to blue at their bases, awkwardly share the black ground with a white dot. It was the only painting of the eight in the show, all dated 2006, that does not have a void at its core.

A two-panel, hump-shaped canvas called *Together Again* approaches 7 by 13 feet. It



Greg Bogin: *The Picard*, 2006, automotive lacquer on canvas, 81 by 63 inches; at Leo Koenig.

features, against a stark white ground, a schematic rainbow of blue, red, black, yellow and green stripes that end in a pot not of gold but of sparkly chrome. Its irregular arc, defined by differing radii at left and right, lazily reiterates the contours of the canvas, like a Frank Stella stripe painting on Xanax. The same rainbow zips around the perimeter of the smallish, squarish *Species 5618*, passing through a chrome square in one corner (like “Go” on a Monopoly board) and making an abrupt pit stop in the painting’s interior.

As do Karin Davie, Ruth Root and the masterful Albert Oehlen, Bogin demonstrates that humor in painting is not confined to figuration. Painters identified with reductivist strategies, like Albers and Noland, are less pertinent to this artist than a Pop-centric engagement with the idea that the quotidian and mundane, stripped of distractions, can achieve an unlikely lyricism. —Stephen Maine

consistently characterized his best work. He has shown regularly in New York since his first exhibition at Martha Jackson in 1953, and he was accorded a Guggenheim retrospective in 1962. For all the accolades the artist has received in Europe, one imagines he would be considered here on the level of a Francis Bacon. On the contrary, Tàpies remains on the edge of the radar of many American viewers.

To be fully understood, Tàpies’s work needs to be placed in a Spanish context, alongside the paintings of Antonio Saura and Manolo Millares. During the 1950s, all three artists developed raw, abstract styles partly in reaction to the harsh Franco dictatorship. Among other artists grouped under the *art informel* umbrella in the 1950s, Tàpies shares with Dubuffet an interest in primitive modes of depiction and with Burri an interest in materiality.

In this exhibition, Tàpies, as he has for years, used marble dust and synthetic resin to create surfaces that are at once non-