

# ARTFORUM

Catherine Taft, "Openings: Laeh Glenn" *Artforum*, April 2016, pp. 222-225

OPENINGS

## LAEH GLENN

CATHERINE TAFT



Laeh Glenn, *Landscaping*, 2015, oil on linen, 62 × 50".

**HOW SHOULD A PAINTING BEHAVE?** The dreamy yet sober canvases of Laeh Glenn seem predicated on this question. The Los Angeles-based artist asks why a painting should exist at all, what its motivation should be, and how one should relate to it—particularly at a moment when images circulate so quickly and casually, and when painting itself seems to exist somewhere between code and canvas. She extracts

the medium's genres—still life, portrait, nude, geometric abstraction—to coolly linger in and wonder at its protocols. Through her distillation of these pictorial archetypes, she reveals new and ever-shiffter boundaries between the image and the world.

*Landscaping*, 2015, is typical: It is a simple composition in which flat fields of color are molded into sky, hills, foliage, and water. Bold black lines delineate each

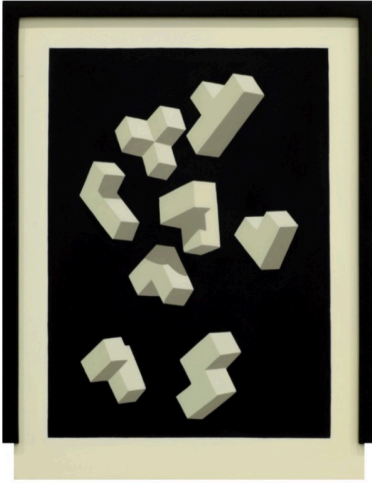
of the picture's features while fitting poorly to those features' edges. The "look" is nostalgic yet eerily placeless, bringing to mind obsolete hand-inked comic-book illustrations or even Microsoft Office's catalogue of clip art, that enduringly strange standby of late-1990s and early-2000s design. Moreover, *Landscaping* tells us nothing about the specificities of location or the act of grooming nature, functioning instead as a generic stand-in for the

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Laeh Glenn, *Untitled*, 2013, oil on panel, wood, 16 1/4 × 12 1/2".

action of a kind of picture making. That is, by painting a landscape, she is landscaping—just as one could be still-living, self-portraiting, or nuding. The work flows from a transposable verb, a test drive of genre.

In most of Glenn's pictures, "subject matter" gets simplified to its most basic graphic components. In *Mums in a Vase (Blue)*, 2012, and *Four for 4 #2*, 2014—which share a still-life composition that recurs in other works—representational elements are devoid of depth: A surface is marked by a simple horizon line; petals are suggested by muted chiaroscuro; shadow is formed by apertures and negative space. Glenn's treatment of shadow brings interesting personality to her work; there is humor in her treatment of spatial illusion, and her shadowy breaches of pictorial space recall Artschwager's *blps* and Baldessari's dots, pixels, and holes. Her simplified images verge on cartooning—which, as artists such as Carroll Dunham, Raymond Pettibon, and Philip Guston have taught us, is a great way to question the authority of painting—while retaining the impressions of digital design, its fills and drop shadows. *Untitled*, 2013, for example, depicts an arrangement of eight cubic objects—think *Tetris*—which hovers against a black ground, while *Flowers*, 2015, displays its titular subject distorted by pixela-



Laeh Glenn, *Mums in a Vase (Blue)*, 2012, oil on panel, 20 × 16".

tion. In spite of the velocity and immateriality suggested by these paintings, they are resolutely concrete things, created in a slow, considered manner: Until only recently, Glenn painted on sanded wooden panel, laying down a surface of gesso, then applying up to fifteen layers of oil paint to create a smooth, hermetic surface. As each oil layer took several days to dry, the process of finishing one small painting was long and deliberate,

even time-based. Mistakes could easily be wiped away until the final composition was hand-touched to perfection; if an accidental mark remained, it was a well-considered move.

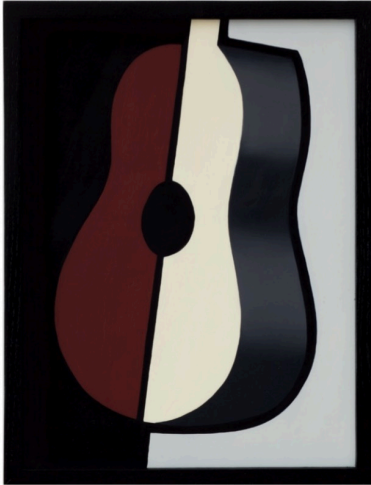
Each of Glenn's disparate paintings attempts to unravel what *style* might mean—how it might knit together the high and the low, the reified and the real. She demonstrates the world of artistic possibilities

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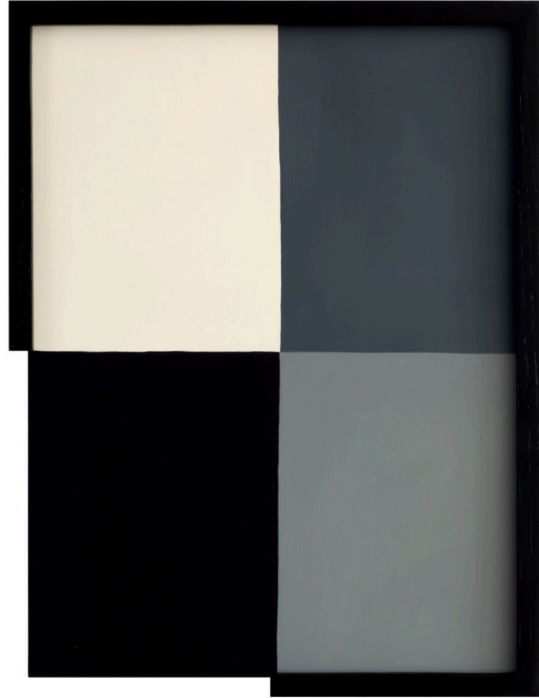
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Clockwise, from left: Laeh Glenn, *Brown Guitar*, 2013, oil on panel, wood, 16 1/2" x 12 1/2". Laeh Glenn, *Grey Grid*, 2013, oil on panel, wood, 16 1/2" x 12 1/2". Laeh Glenn, *Table with a Pitcher*, 2012, oil on panel, walnut, 41" x 15" x 15". Laeh Glenn, *Fruit Relief*, 2013, wood, paint, dimensions variable.



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Right: Laeh Glenn, *Two Blue Fish*, 2015, oil on linen, powder-coated steel, dimensions variable.

Far right: Laeh Glenn, *Stomping Ground*, 2015, oil and acrylic on linen, 64 × 52".



**In spite of the velocity and immateriality suggested by these paintings, they are resolutely concrete things, created in a slow, considered manner.**

that might paradoxically arise from what Benjamin H. D. Buchloh disparaged as style's commodity-like properties: its "universal exchangeability, its free-floating availability." In her first solo exhibition, at Thomas Duncan Gallery in Los Angeles in 2013, Glenn presented three small paintings: a vaguely cubist composition, *Brown Guitar*; an inky black abstraction, *Illustration*; and a geometric panel, *Grey Grid*, all made that year. Each work was roughly sixteen by twelve inches and painted on panel to matte perfection. The show also included the sculpture *Fruit Relief*, 2013, composed of eight geometric wooden forms resting on a wooden table, as if a heavily abstracted still life had been given three dimensions and returned to real life. The four works shared an earthy, bluish palette punctuated by swaths of black, giving visual unity to otherwise formally dissimilar compositions. The wooden sculpture also "matched" the strange wooden frames around the pictures, two of which were customized, with corners and portions of sides missing. This is an ongoing motif in Glenn's work: In the aforementioned *Tetris*-like

painting, for instance, the frame is missing its bottom side, and the painted pieces seem poised to spill out of the picture and onto the floor. Like *Fruit Relief*'s rendering of flat designs in three dimensions, the partial frames in this and other works let illusionism mingle with the real realm of objects, crystalline screen space with obdurate stuff.

Glenn has described her work as furniture, and she often arranges it with an eye toward its surroundings—as a way to engage, enliven, and create an impression of space. It verges on decor. Her recent paintings, for instance, build on one another, relying on careful installation choices that balance or break up a wall. And whereas her older paintings seemed like literal extensions of furniture—especially *Table with a Pitcher*, 2012, displayed freestanding on a walnut table—these more recent works hint at sculptural weight through material and size. Painted on linen and unprimed canvas, they further imbricate the space of real objects, the commodity, and Painting (with a capital P).

Eight such canvases were exhibited at NADA Miami Beach this past December, installed edge to edge in the booth; the artist knowingly overhung the small cubicle as if to poke fun at the market context. The works, such as the quasi-representational *Stomping Ground*, 2015, show a renewed inventiveness in their juxtaposition of vastly different registers. *Two Blue Fish*, 2015, has a lighter palette and a distinct playfulness, collapsing the impossible matteness of powder-coated steel and oil veneer. Though Glenn remains wary of how pictures interact with the world, she nevertheless wants to get cozy with the medium, with its difficulties and physical facture. Her hopes for painting are dryly optimistic: how freeing it must be to paint now that the aftermath of the aftermath of modernism is supposedly past. And yet our era poses challenges of its own. Glenn's work expresses the contradictions of painting in our moment: It is a material thing that must reckon with a virtual world. □

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## New American Paintings

Zevitas, Steven, "16 Artists to Watch in 2016," New American Paintings Blog, February 2016

### LAEH GLENN

Altman Siegel's solo booth of new paintings by LA-based artist Laeh Glenn at the NADA Art Fair was simply my favorite booth at any art fair in Miami this past December. Just wow. Just when you think that it would be impossible for an artist to do something with painting that would blow you away, there it was. Collectors agreed, as the entire booth was sold out before the end of the fair's typically frenetic VIP opening. Glenn mines a wide range of art historical tropes, yet arrives at paintings that are fresh and resolutely her own. I have rarely seen the figure and abstraction locked in more resonant harmony.



*Laeh Glenn, Courtesy of Altman Siegel, San Francisco.*

# CULTURED

Summer 2015

PHOTO BY LEE THOMPSON. COURTESY THE ARTIST, GAVIN BROWNS ENTERPRISE. THE ARTIST AND GALERIE MAX HETZLER, BERLIN. (SELBSTPORTRAIT ALS HOLLÄNDERIN); 356 MISSION (FINITE/INFINITE)



## LAEH GLENN

Painter Laeh Glenn is part of the burgeoning Los Angeles art scene and is gaining much attention internationally. The UCLA graduate cut her teeth working as Laura Owens' studio assistant and has since branched out on her own. Her small, yet meticulous paintings, are often cased in unfinished frames made by Glenn, that don't fully enclose her work. Last year, Glenn exhibited her first solo show in San Francisco at the Altman Siegel Gallery and is currently part of "No Joke," a group show at the Tanya Leighton Gallery in Berlin.



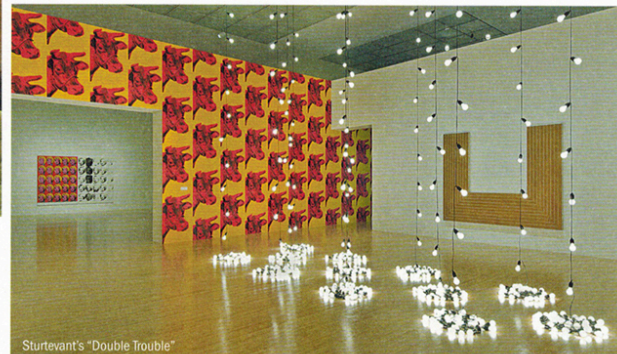
Albert Oehlen's *Selbstportrait als Holländerin* [Self-portrait as Dutch Woman], 1983

"I'm looking forward to Albert Oehlen's exhibition at the New Museum this June. This will be Oehlen's first major New York show, which, considering how long he has been working and the impact he has had on contemporary painting, is long overdue."



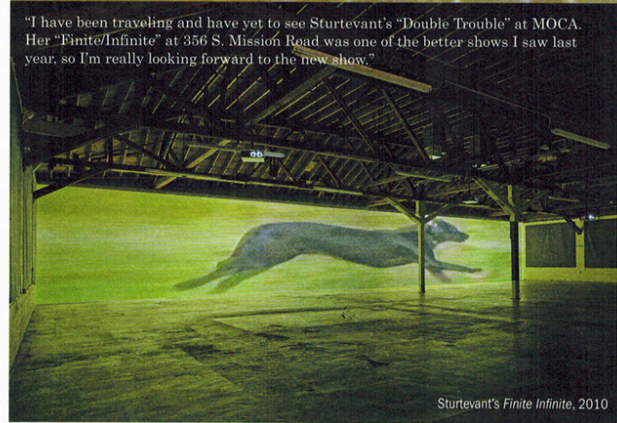
"Asha Schechter has been making some really funny and interesting animated videos dealing with computer-generated images and inter-connectivity. He has a show opening this month in Los Angeles, which I'm excited to see!"

*Picture 066b* (Rubiks Cube, Clear Book, Clubmasters, Rubiks Cube, Vintage Pictures, Retro Photos Cotton Fabric, Thumb tack), 2014



Sturtevant's "Double Trouble"

"I have been traveling and have yet to see Sturtevant's "Double Trouble" at MOCA. Her "Finite/Infinite" at 356 S. Mission Road was one of the better shows I saw last year, so I'm really looking forward to the new show."



Sturtevant's *Finite Infinite*, 2010



Glenn in her studio

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## SFAQ

Lutz, Leora, "REVIEW: 'Ordinary Objects' by Laeh Glenn," *SFAQ*, January 2015

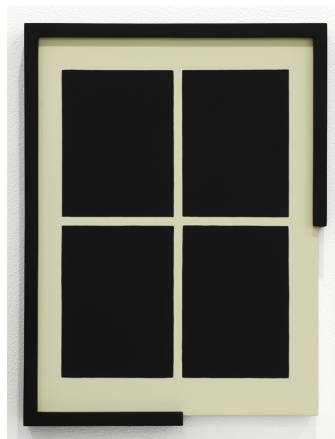


"Ordinary Objects", Laeh Glenn installation view. Image courtesy of Altman Siegel Gallery.

Laeh Glenn's first solo exhibition at Altman Siegel is a study in genre. Addressing many defining tropes of several art movements and theoretical concerns, the work acts as a survey of various recognizable gestures, subjects and configurations as a means to question the known and what is yet to be found. Void of shine and luster, the works are painted with an extremely smooth finish, resembling images in nostalgic grey-scale newspapers or art exhibition catalogs.



Laeh Glenn, Untitled, 2013 (LG-P13-28), 16 3/4" x 12 3/4". Oil on panel with wood.



Laeh Glenn, Untitled, 2013 (LG-P13-18), 16 3/4" x 12 3/4". Oil on panel with wood.

The sixteen works are rendered in black, grey, creams and white (one piece is predominantly blue) and are all displayed in black frames. The works are small; each piece is a little bit less than 17" tall and a little bit less than 13" wide, creating a uniform trajectory of intimate scale. Hung in a formal configuration, the works line the walls one by one. The frames are proportionate to each piece and some are missing segments to reveal the edge of the painting and the wall behind. A few pieces use this tactic—the frame becomes formal art structures that metaphorically

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reiterate what may not be “holding up” to the images’ historically heavy past it emulates.



“Ordinary Objects”, Laeh Glenn installation view

On the wall facing the entrance of the gallery, and flanked by two windows is a beautifully rendered painting of two columns: one black and one very dark grey on a cream background. The lower portion of the frame is gone, and the columns hang down rigidly below the black frame against a white background as if ready to be pulled out. Another piece includes four black squares with the lower right corner of the frame missing, unhinging it from the confines of the rest, but not quite ready to let it go. Each of these pieces clearly remarks on Minimalism while other works are more reflexive of classic and traditional subjects, such as still-lives or portraits, and others indicate Surrealist decisions. Four of the works are black geometric shapes, either rectangle or rhomboid-esque that are inserted in the frames, allowing for negative space to be a part of the composition and the wall to become integral with the work.



Laeh Glenn, 4, 2013. 16 3/4" x 12 3/4". Oil on panel with wood.

As individual pieces the work in the show is rendered with supreme care and perfection, to which can be chosen many favorites. By presenting the work in this monotone, “black and white” way, the objects become ordinary as the everyday, as the title of the exhibition, “Ordinary Objects” implies. But the work is most impactful as a conceptual whole—a replicative history of art retold in Glenn’s visual language for the contemporary moment—frozen in time as testimonial to the age old question: “what next?”



## San Francisco Chronicle

Baker, Kenneth, "Glenn's Elegies," *San Francisco Chronicle*, January 31, 2014



The shapes of "Untitled" (2013), oil on panel with wood by Laeh Glenn, incite mild hallucination. Photo: Jay Jones

Los Angeles painter Laeh Glenn has a show of quietly comic but deeply considered new works at Altman Siegel. They tell us, though, less about the world than about the art world around us.

Summoning an ancestry that includes Allan McCollum's "plaster surrogates" for paintings and the dysfunctional Pop furnishings of the late Richard Artschwager, Glenn makes paintings that evoke things firmly lodged in memory as ciphers, but unrecoverable in detail.

One untitled piece contains the makings of a still life: a round-cornered tabletop, a vase-like shape

surrounded by puffs of white softly mottled with gray. But the image's flattened black, white and gray shapes, for all their sharpness, have so little detail and definition that they incite mild hallucination. The flower blossoms, which cast no shadows, might be puffy clouds drifting in a distant sky beyond the window that is the picture. A blob of black at the bottom, reminiscent of one of Salvador Dali's melting pocket watches, seems to spill out of the picture space. The piece as a whole can read as a picture of a still life arrangement or of a still life painting. Glenn's style implies a depletion of value in that distinction, and in our attention to it.

Several of Glenn's pieces have black frames that stop short of running around the objects' perimeters. They offer a presentational equivalent of "etcetera," but like the stripped definition of her pictorial forms, the abbreviated frames seem to anticipate cursory attention and snap conclusions.

The summary quality of Glenn's work implies a reception in which knowingness claims the traction that in a less-hurried, less-calculating art domain, belonged only to vision.