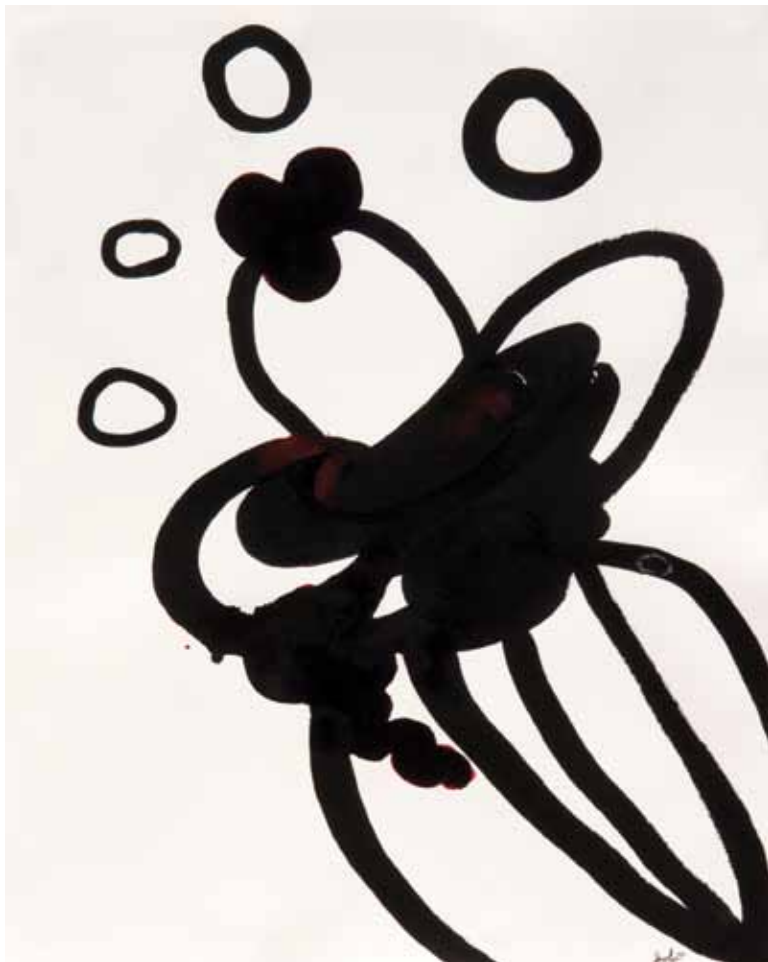


DAVID SOLOMON

JAY ETKIN GALLERY
703 CAMINO DE LA FAMILIA, SANTA FE

FOR NEARLY A DECADE, David Solomon has been assimilating the fresh air, extraordinary light, and magical visual spirit of Santa Fe. He has meticulously mixed these inspirational components together, producing remarkably simple and well-balanced works which seem to celebrate his unique style and sensibility for organic shapes that are locked together within rhythmic and often colorful compositions. Solomon has sharpened his vision and made a name for himself around town by organizing exhibitions—under the name BANG! and featuring local contemporary artists—that have wide appeal. His own shows have also been well received. Working daily in his studio near SITE Santa Fe, the artist continues to explore a predilection for positioning “dancing” forms in space. His work explores the boundaries of abstract minimal shapes that seem to interact with each other like old friends. In most cases, the objects depicted take a cue from biomorphic floating shapes which might be discovered deep within the ocean. Solomon nets these drifting, irregular outlines from memory, where he later displays and manipulates his “catch” on the surface of his canvases. The simple ingenuity of Miró, Matisse, and even Motherwell is evident here. Splendid works like *Untitled* (11 1/4" x 9 1/4") reflect his natural skill for depicting non-narrative shapes that have a distinct relationship to each other. In other works, such as *Untitled* (30" x 22"), the artist produces an almost calligraphic ink painting on paper that is reminiscent of a spinning top whose equilibrium manages to stay in place although it is tilted like the Leaning Tower of Pisa. This is a show that brings out the best of an artist who has ingeniously gathered together the best portions of his visual inventory, often from memory, to create works that speak softly while holding a big stick.

—BRUCE HELANDER



David Solomon, *Untitled*, ink and gouache on paper, 30" x 22", 2010

CONNECTIONS AND
SCUBA & SEAN

SANTA FE CLAY
545 CAMINO DE LA FAMILIA, SANTA FE

FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO HAVEN'T been to the ten-thousand-square-foot warehouse that is Santa Fe Clay, well, you're missing out on one of the more exciting and successful projects in an increasingly formulaic and complacent city. In October, the gallery featured a show by three functional ceramic artists and three illustrators. Two of the illustrators, Sandra Wang and Crockett Bodelson, work under the moniker of Scuba, and their imaginative little paintings, while vast in scope, are neither deep in feeling nor authoritative in intensity, but kids seem to like them. While I was looking at their work a small group of 12-year-olds appeared, each of whom was thrilled by the random subject matter and exuberant colors. Harmless, decent, and derivative, this work is reminiscent of the exotic souvenir paintings one finds in distant resort markets, where the locals produce whimsical and affordable kitsch. The other illustrator on display is Sean Di Ianni, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, who produces creatively drawn oddities of disconnected images, each of which is curiously intense but visually inert. This is simulated savagery at its best, what Baudrillard would have referred to as a “vertigo of interpretation.” Having said all that, the work of these illustrators is both affordable and portable, and the public seemed to respond quite favorably.

Dubious popular art comes and goes, but ceramic kitchenware is eternal. Of the three functional potters on display, the work of Ingrid Bathe vaguely recalls the quality of *wabi*—that sensation of beauty and imperfection. Simple, lined forms with muted glazed finishes of blue or an afterimage of blue work together in a minimal and serviceable aesthetic. Also on display here is the elegant and sensual pottery of Deborah Schwartzkopf, whose mid-range firing temperatures produce a surface quality and color tone that reminds one of a much friendlier world, far from the calamities of history. Hiroe Hanazono completes the trifecta, a magician of condiment dishes and spoons, bud vase sets that rise and fall in waves, and other fanciful creations like tumblers and Zori platters that would be right at home at Asiate overlooking Central Park.

In the back room of Santa Fe Clay is a wall of shelving that holds hundreds of sculpted objects from previous exhibitions. Browsing through them, I was reminded of the quest for the “Unaccountable Object”—that thread in anti-Modernist art that has long challenged the tradition of the purely aesthetic account. The Unaccountable Object is “something” about which one can think of little or nothing to say, though its presence usually fascinates the viewer. Duchamp's readymades, with their added puns, involved surprising recombinations and repositionings of everyday objects and materials, mundane products that confounded the cognitive faculty and turned the traditional medium of art on its head. Oddly, though, it is in the realm of ceramics, still quaintly removed from high art and relegated to the category of craft, that these inscrutable objects are being produced. As opposed to the fine art tendency to threaten or shock, the ceramicist is more apt to surprise the viewer with a minimum of scandal and hype.

A quick visit to Santa Fe Clay is a reminder that some of the best art in Santa Fe isn't hanging on walls in the splashy super-galleries. It's the stuff relegated to “craft” found at galleries like Touching Stone, Tai Gallery, Blue Rain, and Santa Fe Clay, where the work isn't just the stuff of art history, but of things reinvented.

—ANTHONY HASSETT



Hiroe Hanazono, *Wave Chopstick Rest/Bud Vase*, 1" x 3" x 1" each, 2010