

Art & Design

Review

John Henderson



"The Frugal Genius," GOLDEN



John Henderson initiates Golden Gallery's new Lakeview exhibition space with a postmodern take on painting as a medium and a process. In the 2009 Northwestern M.F.A.'s oil paintings, aluminum casts of paintings (pictured), photographs of painted-over photographs and a video of himself mopping his studio floor, painting serves as a reference for sculpture, performance and scanned images.

The aluminum casts are striking in their rugged yet precise variation of texture. Paint strokes on the abstract paintings mounted across from them echo the casts' patterns, but their surfaces are flat. With a trace of Jasper Johns's sensibility, Henderson's inversion of these materials blurs the divide between painting and sculpture. This tantalizing exchange makes us wonder what's hidden beneath the surface of the aluminum and the matted layers of paint.

In Henderson's video, *Cleanings*, the artist seems to execute Jackson Pollock's action painting in reverse: His mop jabs at and strokes his studio floor until the dirty streaks fade, leaving a spotless surface. The deceptively simple piece represents a collision of ideals, where Pollock's 1950s modernist aspirations meet Bruce Nauman's 1970s studio-walking and navel-gazing.

Henderson's serious, understated presentation suits his subtle sense of humor—which is so subtle that some of his works appear derivative. As the artist makes his way in a tradition of competing geniuses, he might benefit from being less conceptually frugal.

—Marissa Perel