

cerulean blue that lie behind it. In *Locked Out*, a comparatively opaque layer of dark teal serves as a similar compositional device while alluding to the commonplaces of a domestic dispute that his earlier work likely would have only figuratively pictured.

If Pestoni previously redirected psychological metaphor from an abstract mapping on the picture's surface to a concrete, material embodiment within the medium of paint itself, the charge of this new body of work lies in the interaction between the artist's tactile layering of oils and the spatial effects produced by the juxtaposition of disparate values of color. In *Breathers*, for instance, we read a deep purple as sitting over pink, marigold, and violet but perceive these lighter hues as spatially advancing within the illusionistic field of the picture. While Pestoni has previously explored the destabilized figure-ground relations produced by this push and pull between the pictorial and tactile qualities of his painted surface, the effect here—as applied to these less-than-pure compositions—is refreshed through a newfound metaphorical framing. The paintings become expressive but not expressionistic, finding a formal rhyme for the mental space that informed their making.

Yet even taking all of the above operations into account, an excess of paint remains—the finishing wisps of a dry-brushed hue (a mint, a gold-tinged tan, a teal) that, rather than sinking into the preceding layers, float above the pictorial field. These strokes of color sometimes reduplicate the paired forms below, as in the twin toothpaste-green arcs that complete *Hooked*. Elsewhere, in *Holy Mountain* or *Pale Sweep*, however, an additional scrape of color introduces an asymmetry. In both cases, such final flourishes activate the underlying pictorial space with an exuberance that, you might say, rehabilitates Pestoni's formerly downcast canvases. In all, these recent compositions achieve a level of buoyancy that belies the actual density of pigment sedimented on their surfaces. As those fragments of figuration and the blocks of color that mask them are made to play a dynamic role in a newly forged harmony, it appears that Pestoni's most recent pictures have been well-served by the artist's resolution to put the past behind.

—Ben Carlson



Jon Pestoni, *Shelf Life*, 2012, oil on canvas, 103 x 78 x 2 1/4".

## LOS ANGELES

### Jon Pestoni

DAVID KORDANSKY GALLERY

Although this first hometown solo show by artist Jon Pestoni was ostensibly an exhibition of formally motivated abstract compositions, the broad swaths of bold, often dry-brushed color that were characteristic of its seventeen medium- to large-scale paintings in fact served to physically frame a literal second layer of meaning beneath. For those who have followed Pestoni's practice closely, these glimpses of figuration call to mind his earlier, rarely exhibited work—paintings that narratively address a rupture in Pestoni's personal life, which, like the canvases, he chose to keep relatively private.

Of course, blocking out the symbolically charged images, as Pestoni did in the paintings on view at David Kordansky Gallery this winter, only intensifies their psychological resonance. In *The Other One* and *Shelf Life* (all works 2012), for example, the underlying depictions—amorphous blobs divided by equally doughy barriers or walls—diagram themes of separation. Pestoni's overpainting then doubles this symmetrical splitting of the canvas, at once repeating the procedure and repressing it. In this way, the base imagery, though occluded, nevertheless plays a determining role in the picture's final composition. But the symmetry is not only reiterated but also reoriented, as made explicit in *Mirror*, the layers of which are separated by a sheer block of lavender that, acting like a scrim, provides an optical ground for the sweeps of