

Smith, Roberta, "Michael Williams: 'Paintings,'" *NYTimes.com*, December 5, 2013

The New York Times

Michael Williams: 'Paintings'

By Roberta Smith | December 5, 2013



Michael Williams's "It Came Out of My Paint Tube" (2013), inkjet and airbrush on canvas.

Canada

333 Broome Street, New York, NY

Through Dec. 15, 2013

Michael Williams continues to develop his sardonic, richly embellished paintings in big, slightly disorienting leaps, through an engaging combination of intuition and rigor. His imagery still emanates from a wellspring of self-deprecating cartooning recently supplemented with, and sometimes all but superseded by, graffitilike scrawls and doodles. But in his latest show, Mr. Williams's usual impasto has been replaced by a pristine, somewhat eerie smoothness that is especially noticeable in the preternaturally even, slightly debased colors and crisp edges of his backgrounds.

That is because these works seamlessly combine rendering by hand with drawing and painting on computer and inkjet-printed on canvas. Four of the 11 works are inkjet only.

The others have superfine spray-gun additions, tightly wound hazes, words and outlines. One recurring motif is a seemingly moronic figure seen in profile with a single large foot, variously shod.

To confuse matters, the spray-gun blur can be conjured quite convincingly on the computer, as attested by "Baby," one of the four all-inkjet paintings, which depicts a newspaper-reading infant observed by a green, distinctly fuzzy, seemingly spray-painted worm. In works like "Ikea Be Here Now," and the irradiated, Vegas-y "Honk if You Don't Exist," the spray-painted additions become anxiously dense and spill over the edges of the backgrounds and onto the sides of the canvases — a sure indication of handwork. But in stronger, more balanced works like "It Came Out of My Paint Tube" (truncated horse, wonderful green-on-green plant life) and "I Wish That Was My Cousin's Name" (inverted Santa on gorgeous dark purple-brown), you soon lose interest in the distinction. Mr. Williams has discovered a painting limbo that, for now, is well suited to his distinctive talent.