

Philip Hinge  
"Darkzone Martyrium" at GCA

Kitsch is dumped out of a five gallon bucket and strewn all over the paintings in Philip Hinge's "Darkzone Martyrium" like an indulgent overload of castoff meat products in a nose to tail offal stew. "The good stuff" is made readily available in these works that combine death metal/goth references with bright fauvist colors. The irony or contradiction of combining these attitudes with opposing stylistic signifiers is clever because both noticeably contain a vacancy which the other can readily fill; death metal is typically illustrated with intricate and nearly colorless pictures placing the signified content on a pedestal that potentially undermines the sheer energy and attitude of the music. Fauvist expressionistic modernism on the other hand tends to empty out the specificities of the content in exchange for among other things the subjectification of the free spirit. It makes a logical sense then to pair the two and the resultant dissonance produces an almost mechanical grinding which is funny precisely because of its inevitability. In the most successful pictures this logic is applied and subverted in ways that bely easy explanation. For instance the gothic candle stuffed in blowhole of a grinning dolphin; the candle's wick landing in a glaring orb of unpainted white gesso that seems to almost cast light from the painting itself. The candle "fits" in the dolphin and also successfully annexes the tacky kitsch of Robert Wyland for brutalization. The synonymous logics hint at a resolution but happily discards it in exchange for dark kitsch opportunism. In another painting the artist's signature corpse painted stand-in sprouts from actual shoes that the painting is resting on, holding a painting-within-a-painting that could be a portrait of Marina Abramovic or just a stand-in for the type of provincial suburban banality that the dark zone's subversive energy is ultimately "hinged" upon. There is a confusing weirdness that permeates these paintings as well though; a kind of zany sand box that restlessly searches for space and light in the form of visual puns. One painting allows a still life of fruits and vegetables to float inexplicably up the picture until in the upper left a fried egg stands in for the sun; in the foreground two chubby bananas overlap each other to form a cross and are lit like candles. The ham fisted redundancy of the gothic gag is gleefully hammered into place in spite of this parallel project of a more general deconstruction of language via symbolic image making. It will be interesting to see which direction the artist heads in next.