

“Sandy Winters at Frumkin/Adams”

By Janet Koplos

Sandy Winters' images almost jump off the wall. It's easy to imagine that they might escape from their confinement within the mundane bounds of rectangular canvases and mutate into shaped paintings like Elizabeth Murray's, or even into fully sculptural forms like John Newman's. But saying that is not to wish it so: these paintings already give the impression of a real-life solidity, which they combine with the heightened color and clarity of an imagined world – and that's quite enough.

The imagery consists of not-quite-placeable forms that tend to look organic, mechanical and arbitrary all at once. Each painting follows the same format: within a border is a central still life arrangement that appears to rest on top of an angular but never simply rectangular “carpet”. The border is primarily a single color (or at least a single tone) but is full of incident. All kinds of stroking and scribbling are evident here, with or without hues other than the dominant one.

All the paintings are 58 by 52 inches, a moderate size, and there's one diptych. Yet, you have to view them from several yards back to avoid feeling somehow physically impinged upon by the strange muscular forms Winters depicts. Many of these objects might be taken for sea creatures, because the fat, fleshy masses that define them seem so weightless. In all the paintings there are snaky-looking elements that might be taken for marine tubeworms. At times these shapes attach to a chunky, engine-like form so that they take on an obscurely pneumatic aspect.

Whatever they are, the objects of Winters' consideration are occasionally arranged one inside the other, as in *The Best and The Worst of Times*, where within a flabby orange cylinder, a ball of string appears to be suspended. Sometimes the encasement is protective, as in *Gestation*, where Winters has rendered a kind of well-stuffed basket/cradle, or in *Elektra, Call Home*, where a tilted form on the right panel might be a padded dog bed. All three of these paintings create the impression that we're looking down on something from an unexpected angle or a vertiginous height, providing another reason to stand back from these canvases – to keep your footing.

Winters' surfaces are densely alive with marks, from the calligraphic fragments in the borders to the repetitive stroking by which she defines her mysterious forms. The linear application of distinct colors creates an effect rather like that of pastels (except for the faint sheen that reveals the medium oil paint) and also makes many of the swollen forms look like cocoons or other wrapped objects. The linear reiteration also contributes inferentially to the forms' three-dimensional impact: because we can see how Winters energetically constructed them, they appear to be substantial.

The effect of these paintings is one of pure pleasure: they convey delight

in the richness of pigment and the physical action of applying it to paper or canvas, along with a conceptual enjoyment of making the everyday new.