

**"Willy Heeks: Recent Paintings" and "Sebastian Blanck: New Morning"**

Through July 22

Scott White Contemporary Art; 2400 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy  
Free; (619) 501-5689 or www.scottwhiteart.com.**"Inspiration: Mexico"**

Through July 15

David Zapf Gallery; 2400 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy  
Free; (619) 232-5004.

## ART REVIEW

FINDING  
THEIR WAYS

Artists offer us a chance to see their worlds

By Robert L. Pincus, ART CRITIC

Call it abstract expressionism. Call it gestural abstraction. Call it old-fashioned. Willy Heeks' art carries with it traces of art from the '40s and '50s. Yet just because we can attach a stylistic label to an artist's paintings doesn't mean that it doesn't offer singular pleasures.

There has been a considerable interval between Heek's exhibitions in San Diego. The last show with Scott White Contemporary Art (then called SOMA Gallery) was in 2000.

His work has remained constant in its focus reaching back to the '90s: layers of color, exuberantly rendered in broad sweeps and small swatches, which frequently mingle with lines that weave across the pictures' surfaces.

The artist, based in Providence, R.I., works small and large in the eight paintings on view, made in 2005 and 2006. He seems at ease whatever the dimensions of the canvas might be, though the larger paintings have greater force to them.

It's easy to lose yourself in "Blue Line," the biggest of the exhibited paintings. It moves from a passage of white that looks as light as a feather to an expanse in layered oranges and reds that has the thickness of fog. The blue line highlighted in the title pulls your eye back to the surface of the picture, like the hint of mapped territories superimposed on the play of colors in the painting.

The fluidity of his forms evokes water, and Heeks is direct about this connection. "Ocean Space Series #5" evokes water, foam and marine vegetation. But it would be shortsighted to see every

painting as being rooted directly in natural forms.

"Archaeology of Thought," as its title suggests, is less tied to nature, its soft-edged forms butting up against each other and bleeding into one another, black against red, white softly veiling a passage in blue. Its space looks deep, as if there were a thicket of lines (or is it abstracted vegetation?) embedded under layers of thinly applied color.

Whether the picture alludes to the physical world or an inner one, Heeks' art seems eager to seduce the viewer. And it does.

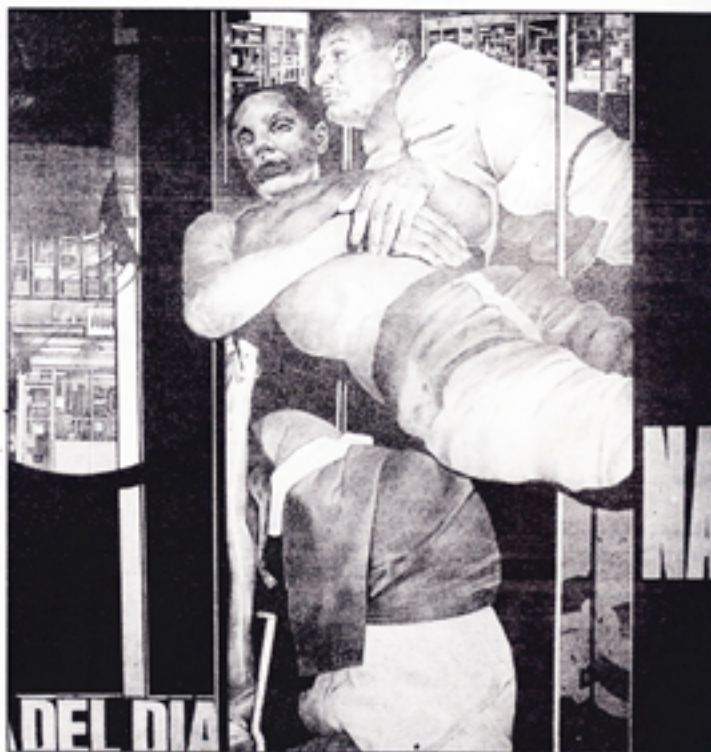
**Chilly morning**

Sebastian Blanck paints nudes, towel-drying themselves after a shower — a contemporary update of the bathers tradition that stretches back for centuries. But Blanck, who lives and works in New York, does something unusual with the genre: He paints himself and also paints his wife.

"Blue Morning," the title of his exhibition at Scott White Contemporary Art, refers not to mood but to the color, which spreads across a tub-style shower, towels and a dot-



Willy Heeks, whose last solo show with Scott White Contemporary Art was in 2000, has a new group of exuberantly colored paintings that includes "The Archaeology of Thought." Scott White Contemporary Art



"Inspiration Mexico" includes Hugo Crosthwaite's large-scale "Del Dia," done in charcoal and pencil on canvas, and provocative works by Marianela de la Hoz and Irma Sofia Poeter. Andy Ralph / David Zapf Gallery

ted shower curtain. The hue, along with Blanck's style, gives these pictures a cool elegance.

But some elegance is just too cool, as in chilly, and that, unfortunately, is the fate of Blanck's pictures. The figures are like signboards of two well-shaped people. The clear precedent is Alex Katz, who also practices painting as a sort of essay in style and who also keeps the viewer at arm's length in a way that is emotionally uninviting.

**Jarring sights**

Marianela de la Hoz's tiny paintings are spooky. Hugo Crosthwaite's large-scale drawings in charcoal and pencil are akin to visions. The work of both is in "Inspiration: Mexico," on view at the David Zapf Gallery along with arresting sculptures by Irma Sofia Poeter. All three have roots in