

## Kari Cholnoky: Motherboard

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An unfamiliar figure surfaces in a few of Kari Cholnoky's recent paintings. I wonder if this is something that could be found somewhere on my body. A puckered asshole? A certain cell, viewed through a microscope? Maybe the figure is a sea anemone, just after being prodded. Kari tells me it is a microscopic organism that is the earliest-known ancestor of humans. *Saccorhynchus*. Its anus and its mouth are the same thing. "That's me," she says. Yet Cholnoky is ill at ease in the role of the author. She wants to recede into the background, just another object, like the *things* that cover the surface of her canvases, as if adopting the dominant color palette might confer a sense of belonging. But these *things* never seem to succeed at mimicking their neighbor. They're like a bashful chameleon, twisting in the halo of an interloper's flashlight. In trying to fit in, they end up standing out.

Kari Cholnoky's paintings explode with visual information, yet remain oddly contained, almost scientifically precise within the formal systems they propose. These are canvases so packed with material that the soft boundaries at their periphery are under perpetual duress. It's as if every empty margin, void, sliver of a stabilizing ground, compositional gap, is filled to the point of utter eradication. There is no silent passage before the cymbal crash—only crash. Unable to hold back, they jut forward, bursting at the seams. Cholnoky is a painter but paint is rarely her primary medium. Instead, she paints with *things*, with *images of things*. She reaches for what feel like the leftovers of a closed down craft store, the synthetic

scraps that remain strewn about the aisles after the blowout sale. In this way, Cholnoky adopts a postwar attitude toward image-making—one that seeks alternative material as it reckons with the contemporary body.

Evoking systems of collection, dispersion, cargo and filtration, the works seem to originate systematically with a color pattern derived from the intricate pathways of circuit boards, terminals and digital interfaces. They seem to suggest a through line between the day-glo canvases of Peter Halley and a mountain of e-waste in Moradabad. In time, the paintings have unraveled from neglect, giving rise to the sort of alternative use value mold spores confer on two-week old takeout, rotting in the fridge. Or maybe the opposite is true, and their beleaguered materiality is the product of just too much attention. Utterly synthetic, they oxidize. What's left is a rusty sparkle.

The paintings find their paternity in the teeming canvases of David Salle and Lari Pittman. The cartoon woman is a consistent figure for the three painters. In Cholnoky's case, these are not actual women, but rather, fleshlights, masturbators, and machines with women's names, like the "Screaming Mimi," a WWII smoke mortar. In "Multiple Launch Display Ejector," Cholnoky confronts the viewer with a pair of bulging breasts, the color and shape of green M&Ms, pressed forward by cartoon hands, as if to say, "which are more real, anyway?" The artist calls our attention to the perversity of capitalist body horror, as she culls images from Amazon ads for sex toys. These silicone women are all breasts, mouth, hole. They are a Cindy or a Barb, no torso required, happily, mindlessly, ceaselessly engaged. As an image-maker, she is in fact a true descendent of the Saccorhytus, bound to consume while she creates, chewing up and spitting out all that crosses her path.

—Gracie Hadland