

Houston

Francesca Fuchs

TEXAS GALLERY

2012 Peden Street

February 18–March 27

This deceptively enigmatic exhibition by Francesca Fuchs, simply titled "Paintings," will not appease those looking for a quick read. While the ten canvases might initially come off as staid, their metaphoric import is tantalizingly tautological—a self-reflective statement on value. The questions raised by the works are both simple and stubborn and thus recall the novels of Magnus Mills. The protagonists in Mills's stories are typically part of a maddening, self-sustaining, yet purposeless system. Similarly, Fuchs creates an existential conundrum in her show, one that implores the viewer to question profound issues via a simple apparatus.

All the works here depict paintings of paintings, and the artist's signature washed-out pastel palette is dominant, if somewhat more painterly than in earlier works. Fuchs's source material is culled from a mix of junk-shop kitsch paintings, which are sometimes positioned next to pictures by renowned artists. By rendering both genres in one work, she not just draws the mercurial nature of aesthetic value into focus but also, more poignantly, pulls herself into the mix. While so much contemporary art distances the maker from the viewer, these paintings expose the artist's deep-seated questioning of worth and value within the very context of the system that is celebrating her. The fact that the exhibition is in one of Houston's top venues only enriches the dialogue.



Francesca Fuchs, *Abstract Print and Bed*, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 59 3/4 x 80".

— Garland Fielder