

**Crawling In Art: A Weekend of Houston's Finest Art Leads Us Through Cruise Sites, Brain Experiments and the Studios of Artists Good and Bad**

By Abby Koenig



Donald Moffett, "Gold/Landscape #2," 2003

This weekend Houston was abuzz with art. Each year, Winter Street and (now) Spring Street studios open their collective doors for the Annual Artist Exhibition, which is similar the studios' monthly Second Saturday, but on speed, giving patrons and art lovers the opportunity to see what goes on behind the artists' closed doors. Adding to the weekend's art extravaganza was the opening of the CAMH's exhibition of American artist Donald Moffett. Art Attack attempted to soak up as much of the weekend's paint as we could by going on our own personal art crawl.

Friday night marked the opening of the CAMH's exhibition "Donald Moffett: The Extravagant Vein," which is the first survey exhibition of the artist's two-decade-long collection of works. Not being familiar with Moffett, I viewed the collection head on, with no preconceived notions. Nine different bodies of work were displayed, each distinct in its own right, some more commanding than others. To call Moffett just a "painter" would be like calling a Swiss Army Knife just a pocketknife; the breadth of his mediums are all-encompassing.

The collection's centerpiece, "The Extravagant Vein" series combines painted canvas with video-light projection. The canvas, thick with gobs of paint, gives the illusion that the video you are watching is three-dimensional. The light-loop, as it is called, is of an outdoor setting, an area of Central Park well known for being a homosexual "cruise site." Stare long enough and the trees sway, inviting you in. If not for the fact that you're well aware a video is being projected, the natural

surroundings, positioned against the coarseness of the canvas, remind you of an impressionist painting; Monet, but plugged in.

Doing a complete 180 (in terms of his work and placement in the museum) is the "Fleisch" series. Stretched khaki-colored canvases are punctured by randomly sewn holes, zippers and circular splotches of black. It's minimalism at its core, but it also does nothing that hasn't been done before. The series gives way to the more provocative, unzipped portion, for which Moffett literally opens the canvas to expose the monochromatic innards in the "Gutted" pieces.



Donald Moffett, "Lot 060707," 2007

Another standout was the "Painting In a Hole" series, a video projection piece in which an arm appears from within the canvas, paint brush in hand, methodically painting the same section over and over, without the satisfaction of completion.

Moffett's works range from electrifying to repetitive and back again, hindered mostly by a 1980s feel that hasn't stood the test of time.