



Christopher Brooks, *Untitled*, 1999.

**Christopher Brooks**  
Rupert Goldsworthy Gallery,  
through May 29 (see Chelsea).

British-born artist Christopher Brooks uses some fairly ragtag materials—cartoon stickers, an empty cassette box, duct tape—in his latest paintings. Yet for all these pieces' (deceptively) slipshod construction and apparent "mistakes," they are compositionally clean: Not a gesture or mark is wasted. If you can imagine the dead-on simplicity of Richard Tuttle mixed with pop-cultural references, you'll get a sense of these elegantly offbeat works.

Brooks's medium of choice is enamel; one painting is little more than a piece of Masonite painted shiny white, with two cartoon stickers of bloodshot eyeballs placed slightly off-kilter. Another work is a large flesh-colored painting made of two mismatched panels; across it, Brooks has laid a single irregular blue shape that looks like a car's rear window. The panels don't quite

meet, but the blue joins them together like some sort of optical Band-Aid.

The work as a whole is about the tension between attraction and repulsion. Brooks uses smooth enamel paint with a high-gloss sheen. It's appealing to the touch but visually hard to penetrate. The paintings lure viewers in only to push them away again. In one piece, a mirror is glued onto a dark camouflagelike background of interlocking greens and browns. Even though you see yourself, the surrounding area is all evasive maneuvers.

Inka Essenhigh and Michael Lazarus, two other young painters enamored of enamel, were Brooks's classmates at the School of Visual Art, but it's another contemporary, Ruth Root, who comes to mind here. Like Root's work, Brooks's paintings are ballsy, no-holds-barred abstractions that seem to ask, What are you looking at? I'm not sure, but I think it's the future.

—Sarah Schmerler