

## **Brush strokes of completion**

**Made up entirely of paintings, a new David Reed retrospective looks at a compelling, four-decade arc that is the core of his work.**

### **ART REVIEW**

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San Diego-born, New York-based artist David Reed had a homecoming of sorts in 1998 with "David Reed Paintings: Motion Pictures" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego.

Aptly titled, the exhibition surveyed Reed's oeuvre of fluid paint troweled into loopy compositions, as well as his experiments with video. The latter included Reed's attempts to intertwine paintings with motion picture narratives by digitally inserting them into Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo" and hanging them in installations mimicking the film's sets

Substantial though it was, the 1998 survey was incomplete. In a rush for currency and in leaning toward then-burgeoning academic discussions of visual culture and new media, it passed on a compelling history -- the early years of Reed's career.

Now on view at Cal State L.A.'s Luckman Gallery, "David Reed: Leave Yourself Behind, Paintings 1967-2005" takes viewers all the way back to when Reed was wrapping up his bachelor's degree at Reed College in Portland, Ore., after stints in a couple of East Coast residency programs.

This second chance for Southern Californians to survey Reed's career includes nothing but paintings -- 23 of them -- and offers a chance to track the development of the work that has remained the center and strength of Reed's practice for nearly 40 years.

The earliest works are landscapes inspired by travels in New Mexico. Some are rough-and-tumble cousins to more conventional landscapes; imagine California Impressionism done by Willem de Kooning or Reed's friend and mentor Philip Guston.

Others take on a more Symbolist-Surrealist theatricality. Still others break down into greater abstraction. Blocks of color seem to be taken from one composition and plopped into the center of another, or the picture is fragmented into a patchwork of color, with warm and cool hues playing musical chairs, tweaking at the horizon lines and spatial logic that should neatly separate them into earth, sky, water and vegetation.

Tying these together is an approach to paint handling that is playful, indulgent and curious. The Impressionist's concern for ethereal light gives way to the literalist's pleasure in materiality. Each shape, shift in scale or relation between forms affords a new experiment in dragging a brush through thick paint.

The drag becomes the staple of Reed's work in the 1970s, but it follows two paths. In one, evidenced by such works as "#42" and "#49," illusionism and luminism disappear. The work, channeling the spirits of minimalism and process art, becomes all about the movement and the material.

