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ART IN REVIEW

Ernesto Burgos: 'Monotony of Type'

By **Roberta Smith**

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At the Kate Werble gallery, Ernesto Burgos's painted sculptures are evocative of some 1950s Abstract Expressionist trends. Above, "Lazy Habits of Thinking," from 2014. Credit...Courtesy of the artist and Andres Ramirez, Kate Werble Gallery

Ernesto Burgos is in his early 30s and still finding his way, but his [second solo show](#) at this gallery is weird enough to catch the eye.

In a way, Mr. Burgos is combining bad painting with bad sculpture to make something that is more than the sum of its parts. If you flattened out his looping pale resin forms, the loose brush work and smeared paint coursing across their surfaces might resemble second-generation Abstract Expressionism from the 1950s, except for occasional additions of spray paint. And if his sculptures were earth-toned, they could evoke a '50s piece by the ceramic sculptor [Peter Voulkos](#), although more precarious. These similarities add a nostalgic note.

But the improvisational energy at work here goes beyond such references. The pieces are painted inside and out, and also sometimes collaged with scraps of images, which makes them full of surprises. In some instances, the painted additions leap from plane to plane, like the coiling black lines that corral “Not in Any Recent Moment.”

More often, there are abrupt changes of pace, as in the contrasting passages on “Lazy Habits of Thinking,” a piece that from one angle resembles a squashed, heavily graffitied garbage can, and from another, a billowing sail of white and cream, anointed with a spare calligraphy.

The title of the show, “Monotony of Type,” raises the question of whether these works are intended ironically. Mr. Burgos may be parodying the whole idea of style, especially an improvisatory one, skewering it as a source of sameness. That makes the show a bit less interesting while whetting curiosity about where he’s headed.

Kate Werble

83 Vandam Street, near Hudson Street, South Village

Through Jan. 10

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