

Gail Dawson : LOOPS & CHANNELS

EXPIRED TIME : Angela White-Tragus



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

JANUARY 10 - FEBRUARY 14, 2004

AUSTIN, TEXAS

GAIL DAWSON

LOOPS AND CHANNELS

About five years ago, Gail Dawson began painting from digital video. Recorded as computer code rather than on a spool of tape, digital video is not unlike painting: no matter how complex its image are, in the end the whole thing comes down to the little bits and pieces—be they bytes or brushstrokes—making it all up. Analog technologies like cassettes or LP's can produce a one-to-one recording, but digital technology is at best an approximation, forcing computers to act like painters—making decisions about what they 'see' and how it should be organized and reproduced. Like paintings, digital representations are translations: a computer is only as good as its programmers; to our eyes, its decisions regarding what information to keep and how best to arrange it can seem strange, even 'wrong' (we are all familiar with the funny colors, halos and pixelization of digital video).

Gail Dawson's paintings and works on paper take on the pixels of digital video as a veil of interference, something between the viewer and what they are looking at, forming and disforming the image, which can only be as 'true' to its source as the logic of its presentation allows it to be. Pixels, like paint strokes, figure representation and at the

same time resist it—consider the hesitant mark of Cézanne or the intentionally indiscriminate brushstrokes of Gerhard Richter—the former signifying a painter's authorship, the latter implying, for some, the death of the individual's ability as such. Inspired in part by the caprices of the camera and the charged history of painterly mark-making, Dawson has invented a pictorial language of dots and lines, circles and diamonds to shape and form her images: at some moments, you see an undecipherable array of marks; at others, a bird or person. Dawson's goal here, at least in part, is to render the mark-making system visible, to make negotiating it a part of looking and to invite the viewer to see not only the image, but also what makes it up.

Early last year, Dawson began videotaping news broadcasts during the build up to the War in Iraq. Although Dawson could paint anything—"all I had to do was change the channel," she says—Dawson was struck by images of Middle Eastern women and how they were presented. Three particular images caught her attention: a single woman holding an object, a group of Iraqi women marching and a gathering of several Afgani women donning their burkas in preparation to leave their house. Dawson comments, "There are these three different activities: one where the woman is alone

(she has a direct relationship with the camera); one where there is a group of people seen from above (with no recognition of the camera, just moving through—they really become just a pattern); and this group of women, one of whom makes direct eye contact with the camera until her veil is on." Complicating the veil of pictorial interference Dawson found a second veil, constructed by the popular news sources she was looking at. Like pixels or paint strokes, the veil of the popular media also has the power to form and disform its images; for Dawson, painting these women was a way of reclaiming their images, "to somehow change those images by reinterpreting them through paint and drawing."

The idea of change through reinterpretation comes up in the other work in this exhibition, *One Second at the Rijksmuseum*. Ninety paintings made from one second of video, shot at 30 frames per second, depict a female visitor to the well-known Amsterdam landmark. She is looking at Old Master pictures—the high-tech media of a bygone era—and we are looking at her, watching as her image flitters and distorts, abstracts into pictorial terms—a veil of half-tone dots—and comes back together again. Caught between her image and what makes it up, the woman dissolves and coheres. It is our



Gail Dawson. *Burqas 00:25*.
2003, 3 panels. Oil on panel. 6" x 8"

job to put image and veil together—and make sense of it—as best we can, one dot at a time.

Philip Martin, Writer
Los Angeles, California
2003

ANGEL WHITE-TRAGUS *EXPIRED TIME*

Most, if not all, artists working in photography admit to using a camera from a very early age. Angela White-Tragus is no exception. From an early age, Angela has used a camera to document images at 1/125 of a second. Every image she sees becomes a snapshot in her mind. Through the years she has integrated this archive of images in her works of art. Angela's memories combined with her present outlooks provide the base of her work and a focal point for her vision. Using photographs of herself as a child as well as those of her immediate family she gives a personal tour of her life both



Gail Dawson. *Burqas 00:25*.
2003. Oil on panel. 6" x 8"

past and present. These images, after being scanned, focused, cropped, magnified, digitally enhanced, and mechanically manipulated, come together to compose a fine art family photo album. Her persistence of vision captivates the viewer who sees something both intimate and beautiful.

Initially influenced by artists working solely in traditional photography, Angela discovered artists who work to free photography from its historical boundaries. Studying art in Dallas, Austin, and Maine, she discovered new mediums that she then merged to bring new life to recycled images.

Experimenting with different materials and processes Angela presents us with new perspectives on how we view our own memories. From her home on the east side of Austin Angela continues to pursue innovative ways and means of revealing her photographs.

In this exhibition of her work, Angela presents her photographs on a variety of scales and uses a multitude of processes. The photographs are framed on wood, reflected in mylar, coated in verathane, etched in copper, printed on paper, sandwiched in plexiglass, and encased in resin. These pieces, aside from their technical merits, are fabricated with an eye for detail. The images invite the viewer to peek inside Angela's memory. The smallest pieces in the show are mounted on small wood frames and backed with reflective mylar.



Angela White-Tragus. *00:04:04*.
2002. 1 of 100 in series. Archival inkjet printed on transparency film, plexi-glass, aluminum rivets. 7" x 7"

These tiny pieces bring the viewer closer where they see themselves reflected as a part of the image. In that moment we are part of her world. Other pieces in the show rely on the wall as the background to bring ethereal colors off the wall and into our imagination. Arranged in a grid, these works combine images from both the past as well as the present. The grid works to bring order to the diversity of subjects in these photos. The largest images, printed on transparent squares, are reassembled to form a single image and employ a verathane coating that gives birth to a look that seems more typical of oil painting. A print from her honeymoon series combines multiple images on one piece of paper. These images, printed in black and white, were created using a photo etching intaglio process. The most unique pieces in the show however, are transparent photographs encased in resin. These pieces mark new paths in Angela's work and combine color and texture to create a three dimensional representation of the original snapshot. Utilizing innovative techniques, such as these, Angela continues to make vibrant works of art from faded snapshots.

These images challenge our visual conceptions; giving us new perspectives on our own transient existence. This body of work



Angela White-Tragus. *Reposo*.
2002, Intaglio print. 15" x 15"

illustrates Angela's experiments through the years as well as successfully communicating the process of uniting her archive of images with craftsmanship and imagination to produce images that are unique and beautiful. These pieces in their current

form give us the idea that our visual conceptions of everyday moments are many things but not mundane.

Matthew J. Booth, Writer,
Dallas, TX 2003

GAIL DAWSON resides in San Francisco, CA. She graduated Phi Beta Kappa in art history from the University of California at Berkeley, and later earned a Master's degree in Education. After moving to Texas in 1994, Dawson completed a BFA and MFA at the University of Texas at Austin, with a concentration in painting. She has shown her work extensively in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston, in both group and individual shows. Gail has received grants from the Dallas Museum of Art, the University of Texas at Austin, and the City of Austin. She has taught for two years as an adjunct lecturer in the Department of Art and Art History at the University of Texas at Austin, and the Department of Art and Design at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. In Fall 2003 Dawson began a tenure-track teaching position as an assistant professor of painting and new media at San Francisco State University.

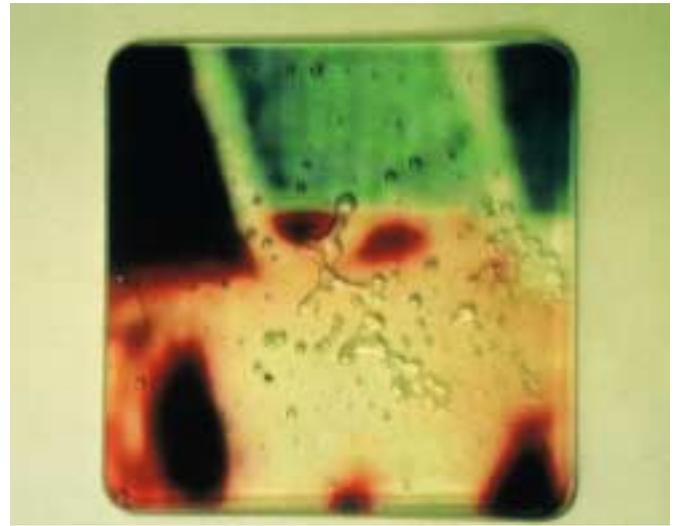
ANGELA WHITE-TRAGUS resides in Austin, TX. She graduated with a BFA in studio art from the University of Texas at Austin and is currently enrolled in a Welding Certification Program at Austin Community College. She has exhibited her work in Austin, Dallas, Arlington, Plano, Texas and Sacramento, CA since 1998.



This Panel: Angela White-Tragus. *Re-reflected*. 2003, 9 of 29 series.
Archival inkjet printed on transparency, reflective mylar, wood frames, verthane. 5-1/2" x 2-1/2" each
Cover Panel: Gail Dawson. *One Second at the Rijksmuseum*. 2002, 30 paintings. Oil on board 8" x 10" each



Gail Dawson. *One Second at the Rijksmuseum* (Detail).
2002, Oil on board. 8" x 10"



Angela White-Tragus. *Plunging*.
2000, 1 of 4 in series. Archival inkjet printed on transparency film,
liquid plastic. 6-7/8" x 6-7/8" each

W O M E N & T H E I R W O R K

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Now celebrating its 24th anniversary, Women & Their Work presents over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, literature, and film. The gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,710 artists in 221 visual art exhibitions, 100 music, dance, and theater events, 12 film festivals, 19 literary readings, and 272 workshops in programming that reflects the ethnic and cultural diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *ArtForum* and National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. Women & Their Work reaches

over 5,000 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

1710 LAVACA ST.

AUSTIN, TEXAS 78701

(512) 477-1064

wtw@texas.net

www.womenandtheirwork.org

