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ART

HOWARD SHERMAN TILTS TOWARD FIGURATION AT MCMURTREY GALLERY

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DOUGLAS BRITT AT 8:47 AM ON OCTOBER 6, 2011

Houston painter Howard Sherman, who has long straddled the line between abstraction and cartoonish figuration, tilts firmly in the latter direction in his latest exhibit.



Howard Sherman: From left: *The young and the naked*, *Intellectual parlor game* and *Gold plated AK*. Photos: Douglas Britt/29-95

Just three of the show's eight paintings — *Established thought leader*, *Apocalyptic*

wallpaper and *Message over style, style over message* — are what I'd call classic Shermans, meaning their explosive painterly gestures and splashes are interwoven with comic doodles, trompe-l'oeil elements and hard-edge passages in an arrangement that implies chaos but is the result of careful deliberation.



Howard Sherman: *Message over style, style over message*, left, and *Apocalyptic wallpaper*.

Intellectual parlor game, with its mostly solid patches of unmixed color and explicitly delineated cartoon figures and faces, stands out among the more figurative paintings in the multiplicity its figures, who seem to be in combat. In the others, as in all eight of the drawings on view, a single dominant figure emerges from some of Sherman's least ingratiating compositions to date. This is a crossroads show for an artist rightly trying to subvert what has become the instant recognizability of his style.

Howard Sherman: *Apocalyptic Wallpaper* continues through Oct. 15 at [McMurtrey Gallery](#), 3508 Lake; 713-523-8238.

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