

MODERNPAINTERS

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July/August 2015



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MIDDLE EAST // BEIRUT

REVIEWS

Sam Falls
Installation
view of
*Unfilled (Life
in California)*,
2014, 1984 Ford
Ranger, soil,
succulents,
5½ x 5¼ x 15¾ ft.

LOCKSGALLERY



600 Washington Square South
Philadelphia PA 19106
tel 215.629.1000 fax 215.629.3868
info@locksgallery.com
www.locksgallery.com

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PHILADELPHIA

Jane Irish

Locks Gallery | March 6–April 11

By Paul Laster

A history painter, Irish is known for making colorful canvases of charming European estates that are curiously infused with layers of information and imagery related to the Vietnam War. For her fifth solo show at the gallery, the artist presents a selection of interior and landscape paintings on Tyvek and linen, which she made in situ in France and Italy, alongside mixed-media studies and ceramics that more directly invoke the Vietnam conflict.

La Malouinière de la Chipaudière, 2014, flaunts the ornate interior of an 18th-century manor in Brittany, with *Yellow and Red*, 2013, an earlier painting by the artist depicting colonial Vietnam, illusively placed on the wall. *Resistance Ceiling*, 2014, similarly melds a salon of a château on the outskirts of Paris with an imaginary portrayal of protesters—civilians, Vietnam War vets, and Buddhist monks—in the ceiling above.

The remaining 11 paintings on view—mostly rendered in gouache on gessoed Tyvek—depict villas and gardens in and around Florence, Italy. *Via di Santo Spirito Salon Firenze* and *Via del Rustici Firenze*, both 2013, show decorative old rooms vibrantly painted with luscious brushstrokes, while *Museo di Casa Martelli*, 2013, offers a 16th-century palace in a wispy manner of mark making reminiscent of Florine Stettheimer's "Cathedrals of Art" paintings.

Rounding out the exhibition are two mixed-media studies and four glazed ceramic bowls in the shape of amphitheaters of war, illustrated with portraits of American presidents, figures from 1970s protests, and past and present visions of Vietnam mixed with decorative art motifs. *Upside Down Lyndon Johnson Upside Down*, 2014, portrays Presidents Johnson and Nixon with the repeated question "Your Son?" and 2015's *Faience*—a French word for Italian opaque-painted earthenware—features Long Biên Bridge, a Daydé et Pillé-designed colonial remnant in Hanoi. Embedding political and social issues in Rococo salons, pastoral scenes, and Baroque settings, Irish elevates antiwar protests to an aesthetic realm while exposing the trappings of power that incessantly fuel the war machine. Rather than hitting us over the head with her antiwar sentiment, Irish provides something lovely to look at—taking us back to the roots of imperialism while subliminally whispering a different message.



Jane Irish, *Pink Bowl Pattern Book Leaf*, 2014. Chalk, gesso, egg tempera, gouache on paper, 22 x 30 in.

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