

CRITICS' PICKS



Sayre Gomez, *1, 2, 3, 4 Thiefs (Part 1-4)*, 2011, acrylic on canvas, each 62 x 72".

LOS ANGELES

Sayre Gomez and J. Patrick Walsh III

LAS CIENEGAS PROJECTS
2045 South La Cienega Boulevard
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Like the bare frame of a building, the angular name of Zzyzx, California, serves as a kind of linguistic scaffold for this exhibition. A mixture of sculpture, painting, collage, and video articulates a loose imaginary corollary to the town at the end of the alphabet through a series of correspondences that are formally clear yet logically tenuous and, ultimately, charged with unnamed fears. Sayre Gomez's use of bold primary colors and J. Patrick Walsh III's muddled yet ecstatic palette provide easy links between the individual pieces. For example, a chunk of sunny yellow foam beneath the flat-screen television in Walsh's *Knife's Sun* (all works 2011) seems to exist only to match the hue of Gomez's *The Charismatic Object*. Similarly, nonsensical text in a serif font featured in many of the works—most notably Gomez's *Lorem Ipsum Painting (Citations of Thirst)*—appears to have a compositional rather than signifying function. Yet, if read, these phrases, like garbled news, suggest vague and poetic dangers.

This paranoia reaches a chilling intensity in the dreamlike image of a burglar that appears in several of Gomez's paintings wherein a pair of white gloves, stark in blue darkness, lift the sash of a window from the inside. The image wraps around the sculptural *Thief Plynth* and is also faintly visible in the background of *Lorem Ipsum Painting*. But its repetition across the row of four large, seductive canvases in *1, 2, 3, 4 Thiefs (Part 1-4)* looms over the exhibition. In the second iteration, a black rectangle with a black border obscures most of the canvas. In the third, the image melts upward, the white cotton fingers spilling out of the building like smoke. Through the *Thief* paintings—indeed, through painting, that most classic of pictorial windows—threatening contingencies enter the gallery. Each piece then seems to tell a version of the same story, with the details, like the silhouetted roses beneath the windowsill, at once obvious and inexplicable.

— Travis Diehl