

Art speak

And now for something completely different

Lynn Davison looks at life from both sides.

'Lynn Davison: Recent Work' • Allyn Gallup Contemporary Art / Mira Mar Gallery through Feb. 29

If she can paint so well, why doesn't she paint pretty pictures? Like it or not, that's the first thing that pops into your head when you look at the work of Lynn Davison. And let's be clear ...

She paints very well indeed.

How she paints is mostly in oils. What she paints is chiefly the human figure. Her figurative technique is astonishingly well-developed — but there's also something astonishingly odd



by Marty
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about the way she paints human beings. Why?

Here's a theory ...

As the fun-loving German physicist Werner Heisenberg once noted, the observer affects the thing observed. The guy working out in the gym stands up straighter when a pretty girl walks in. The quarrelsome family is all smiles when grandpa appears with a camera. Smile. Say cheese. Your public self, recorded for posterity.

The painter, too, affects what's being



She's come undone — Lynn Davison's "Buttons Not Bows"

painted. Painters working in the long, unbroken tradition of realistic representation tend to gravitate towards serious subjects — and they approach these subjects seriously. The result is the kind of style usually reserved for family portraits, historic figures, and people who sit behind big desks in the government or private sector. Under such a painter's eye, even Bill Clinton sits up straight.

Davison paints with realistic techniques, but she doesn't paint what other realist painters paint. Her eye gravitates towards

subjects we usually don't take seriously — folks who aren't playing with all their marbles, in one way or another. She also looks at the people we do take seriously — but only when they're doing the kinds of things that people do when they don't think they're being watched. And, for good measure, she paints everyone naked.

The result may seem disturbing at first. But the more you look at her pieces, the more you see her sense of humor. It's a dark, David Lynchian sense of humor — Lynch

at his peak, about the time of "Blue Velvet," say. Weird? Sure. But what she's painting is weird — humanity, that is. We're weird, at least the part of us we don't like to show to the world — our other side, our ridiculous, goofy private side. Davison has the courage to take a serious look at that side of humanity, to laugh at it, to laugh with it, and to clearly paint all she sees. As Joni Mitchell once said, "I've looked at life from both sides now ... " So has Davison.

So will you if you see her work. □



Detail, Lynn Davison's "Head Over Heels"