

Keeping pace in a shared space



Visual Arts Aidan Dunne

Reviewed

John Gibbons, Charles Tyrrell, Taylor Galleries until Oct 8 (01-6766055)

Phillip Allen, Kerlin Gallery until Oct 8 (01-6709093)

The Quarry Paintings, Mary Theresa Keown, Solomon Gallery ends today (01-6794237)

Mary Theresa Keown, whose *Quarry Paintings* are showing at the Solomon Gallery, is an unfailingly interesting, thoughtful painter. She has been consistently interested in the mechanics of representation, the way images are constructed and perceived, and she takes her concerns much further in her latest work. Along one exploratory trail, she uses fragile expanses of dry powdered pigment to signify not so much the physical properties of the paint medium as the tacitly fabricated nature of images.

Similarly, using pigment suspended in conventional, fluid medium, she makes paintings that set out to question our easy, habitual readings of all kinds of images. An obvious example is her ambitious, composite *30 Obscuras*, derived from 30 fashion magazine covers. Fashion images are conspicuously constructed, and magazine covers even more so. It should be said, though, that Keown does not seem to be engaged in a critique of the fashion industry as such. What interests her is the image.

As the title indicates, she sets about obscuring the image as a way to point to the way it is constituted. She employs the extraordinary mimetic potential of oil paint in underlying representations, and then uses the expressive, opaque properties of the same paint to cancel the images, thwarting and partly obscuring them. It's a logical progression for an artist who has been both drawn to and wary of the versatility of a medium she clearly loves.