

Painting Skins

For many years I have been interested in pattern as both an orderly, rational system and, paradoxically, a means to ecstatic contemplation, the visual equivalent of chant or prayer. I combine these two realms in several ways. My paintings are ornamented skins peeled up from plate glass. I take mechanically reproduced patterns from books or photographs, xerox them and then collage and disort them on computer. My sources include illustrations of tattoos, architectural ornament, and in a recent series, the upholstery on a Greyhound bus seat that took on a life of its own during a long, drowsy ride. I carve the resulting images into rubber blocks that become the templates for a hybrid of painting and printmaking. The mechanically produced starting point becomes a tool for the hand guided by intuition and accident. The skin of paint, the use of tattoo and other decoration serve to humanize the process. The technique I have developed - pressing the printing blocks through thin sheets of paint, then spreading additional layers of mediums and glaze - creates both dimensionality and luminosity. These qualities transform what begins as flat patterning into something both tangible and unknown. The surfaces that result in these reverse paintings feel both delicately intimate and vertiginously distant.