

Richard Aldrich

Bortolami

Richard Aldrich's show presented a diverting, eclectic, imaginatively connected group of 20 paintings, 10 large, 10 small. Patches of color in thick brushstrokes swept down in lazy, controlled zigzags, while cloudy washes seemed born out of the continuous swirling of a brush. No stroke was allowed the anonymity of disappearing into the paint around it. Altogether the show conveyed an intense preoccupation with process, medium, and construction.

Three paint-smudged wooden shards on *If I Paint Crowned I've Had It, Got Me* (2008) run vertically over large rectangular cutouts, which become, in effect, windows onto a wooden frame and the wall on which the work hangs. One small painting, *Looking* (2008), attracts the viewer's gaze with the back of a boulderish head. Then, like a punch line, the piece hanging next to it, *Looking with Mirror Apparatus* (2008), presented a blown-up version of the figure. A slice at the bottom reintroduced the gallery wall, and a small mirror set atop the wooden stretcher bar reflects the viewer, reversing the gaze. In this way, viewers become creators, working in a language provided by the artist.

The final work, *Bed* (2008), eagerly provoked comparisons. The headpiece lies at the bottom; the fabrics representing sheet and pillow are harpooned together with sticks of wood. With the depersonalized, almost two-dimensional bed that recalls Rauschenberg's construction, Aldrich seems to have been looking for the gap between life and art but found instead only a renewal of a familiar symbol—a flat dead end. —**Kai Turner**



Richard Aldrich, *Bed*, 2008, cloth and wood on linen, 84" x 58".
Bortolami.