

RICHARD GRAY GALLERY

# LA WEEKLY

## Jim Lutes' Visual Rants, Laddie John Dill's Monumental Materialism

BY PETER FRANK

TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2008 AT 3 P.M.



Jim Lutes Hey, Kid (1997-2008)

Gloriously elaborate and hermetic, Jim Lutes' invariably small paintings — currently rendered in that most ancient of painting media, egg tempera — are also radiantly, insouciantly gnarly in their cartoonishly but viscerally strange imagery. The denseness and obsessiveness of Lutes' work skirts surrealism, expressionism and Pop as it sucks up spirit and atmosphere, its urban references finally imploding into almost — almost — inchoate abstraction. In this, Lutes follows in the time-honored tradition of Chicago imagism, going

back to the mid-century “Monster” school and the citified funk of the Hairy Who. But nobody — not in Chi-town, not in America, not nowhere – has come up with quite the same kind of Paul Klee-on-acid-and-amphetamines visual rant that Lutes carries out and carries on so eloquently, and so ecstatically. The man is clearly looking forward to the apocalypse, knows where it’s gonna happen, and is inviting us to sit with him in the good seats. Kinkead Contemporary, 6029 Washington Blvd., Culver City, Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; thru May 17. (310) 838-7400.

For something completely different, Laddie John Dill’s new material abstractions, hewn from his usual gritty combinations of stone and steel and stuff, open up the formula on which he has relied for the last umpteen years, revealing a newly found formal, even architectural strength and a surprising lyricism wrought from the hard substances themselves. There has always been an element of the monumental in even the least of Dill’s formations, but here monumentality — tempered by that lyricism and by the human-scale details that relieve these works of their potential ponderousness — is the goal. Still and all, Dill is trying not to overwhelm us, but to elate us, with the expansiveness, and variety, of this recent work. L.A. Contemporary, 2634 S. La Cienega Blvd., Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; thru May 17. (310) 559-6200.

—Peter Frank