

MODERNPAINTERS

December 2015 by Scott Indrisek

ON OUR RADAR

SHAPE YOUR FEELINGS

Minimalist riffs with foam and paint

JUSTIN ADIAN is telling me about the death of former Pantera guitarist Dimebag Darrell. The band, like the artist, hails from Texas; Dimebag was infamously murdered in 2004 during a live performance in Ohio. That assassination—and the ensuing wake, during which Eddie Van Halen honored the fallen musician by laying his own custom guitar in the coffin—obliquely inspired *Razor Back*, a wall-mounted sculpture of canvas-wrapped foam whose stark red-and-white geometry conjures a plush, tactile suprematism. Each of the artist's pieces seems born of a similar mix of influences: autobiographical, pop cultural, art historical.

Adian's sculpture is simple in its construction: hunks of ester foam atop shaped planks of wood, with canvas or drop cloth stretched over the foam and then covered with many layers of paint traditionally used for boat or automobile exteriors. Typically, two or three shapes engage with each other: mushed, stacked, intersecting, clinging, cozying up. Adian's last exhibition at Skarstedt in New York was titled "Fort Worth," after the city in Texas where the artist lived until the age of 18. *Storm Front*, a cool gray-and-blue abstraction, was born from childhood memories of watching weather systems make their way over the landscape's flatness; *I35*, two distended, noodle-like forms wedged into a corner, are meant to mimic the titular highway, which runs from Minnesota down to Laredo.

In Adian's hands, the everyday is mingled with the legacies of Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. He became interested in creating sculptures that occupy a room's corner after seeing one such work by Fred Sandback, which showed him "how easy it is to occupy two walls with a slight gesture." The visible, vertical seam of a drop cloth wrapped around foam reminds the artist of a "prefabricated Barnett Newman zip." Adian's understanding of art was cultivated during visits to the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, where he engaged with work by Ellsworth Kelly, an obvious influence—though Adian answers Kelly's flatness with a lumpy rotundness; his sculptures almost beg to be poked. This is abstraction oddly humanized: quasi-sentient geometries, going places. —SI



Justin Adian
Dungeoned,
2015. Oil enamel and
spray paint on
ester foam and canvas.
11½ x 8½ x 1¾ in.