

Calibration by Kara Gordon

“Calibrated”

*When I look to the sun and
there’s none to be had I
calibrate my fun against
the directions of mad.*

*In this I am saved from the
underwhelming mood of the
day and at least I can say I
delightfully manicured my
spirit my way!*

--Damon Freed

Titled *Life Saver*, Freed’s exhibition expresses his tempo of thought and our own contemporary cadence. The paintings pulsate, pushing and pulling from one end of a dichotomy to another. There is nothing still about these paintings, despite the fact that most of them have very centered compositions. At the same time, however, they are not chaotic. On the contrary, they are extraordinarily balanced. Like an experienced rider on a unicycle, they are stable compositions, but must keep moving in order to remain so.

Our world is full of contradictions, full of impossible juxtapositions that can be devastating. Freed, however, embraces these differences. One work, “ME,” maintains a perpendicular line structure until the bottom of the composition, in which the lines puddle together. Another, “Doormat, Window Painting,” juxtaposes the physical entrance of a home with the cerebral exit, playing with the ideas of refuge and escape. Freed’s titles enhance the hopefulness, the striving for balance, by grounding the abstract compositions with either concrete associations or language that allows the viewer to collaborate in its meaning.

On a physical level, Freed creates a moving stability by working with both balance and asymmetry. Warm colors accentuated by black outlines vibrate throughout the paintings; their asymmetrical applications offset centered compositions. Paintings such as “The World,” “Warm Morale” or “Where To” accomplish a sense of movement, but refrains from invoking urgency, rush or panic. The paintings illustrate life at its fullest—always moving and always on the verge of further action, but never in a hurry.

The tension between the potential and kinetic energies of the paintings calls the viewer to mobilize, to play and to find joy in doing so. The paintings are simultaneously active and reflective, optimistically embracing life in all it has to offer. Freed’s title painting, *Life Saver*, ties together water and land, pattern and solid, line and form. Pulsating in and out of the background, this celebration of the ephemeral, this moving balance, is the life saver.

Kara Gordon is a writer who lives and works in St. Louis, Missouri. This essay is one in a series of the gallery’s exhibitions written by fellow gallery artists and friends.