


The Work of Marcus Cain and Cary Esser is Eyesight for the Blind

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There is no end of the world. It's one long, calcifying note of endurance that goes on until we are lulled into a vortex of white noise. Marcus Cain's paintings depicting various forms of static energy and Cary Esser's fragmented vessels of earthenware and glaze are symbols of a decadent empire forever lurching forward towards it's breaking point. At [Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art](#) we can see a conversation between the ancient and the electronic presented as an anxiety-inducing experience of our own making.



Marcus Cain, *Over the Sun*, 12" x 9", acrylic and latex on canvas

Cain and Esser are signalling a future that is neither dismal or bleak. They heighten our awareness to the uncanny, we know the odd familiarity of these paintings and objects. Esser reminds us of humanity's fragility through delicate surface treatment. The fragmented sense of time in Cain's *Screen Field* lines are like screenshots from an electrostatic generator. Cain's

Alignments are a response to our culture's "constant stream of information experienced in our hyperactive world." Filling the huge canvases (72" x 48") edge to edge, his brush strokes are long, evenly portrayed and filled with colors bold enough to lull you into complacency. He keeps anxiety levels high by not discerning any particular pattern beyond what is present on the canvas. Variations in demand are present, but equal, steady, and holding while remaining in complete isolation from any adverse forces that might present a determination of any sort. For the viewer, it is a screen of noise that goes on *ad infinitum*. Standing in front of all these paintings is both a soothing experience and a jolt to the system. Here is the rise of the machine, the very circuitry of an AI that offers a comfortable place to sit while it locks the door behind you.

Both artists present an organized distinction that humans are ready to turn themselves into supplicants for the gods and monsters that give us the worshipful addictions of religion and technology. Worried that we are too unpopular to be courted, we seek alliances and acquiescence; thus we welcome the rise of continued distraction, inadequate and not filling enough for the energy it takes to consume the past only to receive diminishing returns before the next light of distraction is illuminated.

The unification of these artists is fortuitous. Cary Esser's historical canon is as a master ceramicist and Chair of the Ceramics Department at the Kansas City Art Institute, her decades of work shown and collected across the globe. *Second Surface* cites her study of Ancient Turkish caves and envelope-shaped Native American *parfleches* (rawhide containers used to hold dried meat or pemmican), that reference these historical examples for contemporary thought. These mostly small (7" x 5" x 1.5") wall pieces, resembling deteriorated backpacks or folio cases, "explores the technical and aesthetic edge of possibility within the medium." They favor the *avant garde* for how they bring us to a dystopian recognition of the future about survivability and a historical retelling exhumed by Esser herself.



Cary Esser, Parfleche (b71), 7" x 5" x 1.5", earthenware and glaze

They coordinate nicely with Cain's paintings, at which is the beating heart of the very monster of technology that brings us into this zone. His paintings; the canvas' relentless undulation of pattern is maddening and makes a valid point in that its rhythmic lines beat like a heart. An artificial heart of steel, but a familiar delusion that takes us beyond conceit into conviction.

Along with one's endurance for staying afloat in this life, we have polluted ourselves with debris and static to hasten our drop below the surface. Cain and Esser, perhaps unwittingly, convey this sense of drowning, but the vortex is one in which we fling ourselves head first.

Marcus Cain "Alignments"

Cary Esser "Second Surface"

Sherry Leedy Contemporary Art

February 2 – March 24, 2018

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(L to R):

Marcus Cain, ***Fly or Fall***, 48" x 36", acrylic and latex on canvas

Cary Esser, *Parfleche (w4)*, 16" x 11" x 1.5", earthenware and glaze

Cary Esser, *Parfleche (b80)*, 7" x 5" x 1.5", earthenware and glaze

Marcus Cain, *Saccades*, 72" x 48", acrylic and latex on canvas