

# Susan Hobbs

Colette Whiten

10 September to 24 October 2009



Colette Whiten: *Negotiation* 2009, edition of 3, cast polymerized gypsum, 10 x 15 x 2 cm

Colette Whiten's use of casting and photography—and her subsequent translations—are analogous functions that trace the past. Beginning with her seminal works from the 1970s, she explored and fragmented the body by casting live performers constrained in custom, wooden armatures similar to instruments of torture. The resulting plaster casts—and likewise, the structures that enabled their production—held a record of the performer's presence just as they documented her process. Later, Whiten rendered private sentiments and fragments from the mass media into beadwork and needlepoint, creating acutely humane portraits through methodical, mindful activity. For this exhibition at Susan Hobbs Gallery, Whiten reunites elements from these practices with a series of new plaster reliefs, this time cast from hand-built positives.

In a technological age where most of our personal lives exist in the public realm—through social networking sites like Facebook and Flickr—these small portraits offer familiar scenes, but on a rare level of intimacy. Scaled to the size of a typical 4x6 snapshot, each tiny relief is a *mise-en-scène* of children engaged in solitary play: floating placidly in an innertube, or wedged into a Rubbermaid container filled with water and toys. Their preciousness is belied by their achromatic presences: more akin to Classical memorial sculpture than standard portraiture. Collectively these approximations of the past become a quiet nostalgia, reinforced by Whiten's borrowing of the vignette—that visual trope where the margins of the image are softened and blurred into the background. Here, each relief is partially buried in the wall itself, seamlessly fused with the architecture of the gallery. Likened to blisters, these small blips interrupt the pristine surface of the white cube to make a space for revisiting a universal past.

Susan Hobbs Gallery Inc.  
137 Tecumseth Street  
Toronto, Canada M6J 2H2  
Telephone 416 504 3699  
Facsimile 416 504 8064