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A delay from Ike reshapes art show

By DOUGLAS BRITT Copyright 2010 Houston Chronicle
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COURTESY PHOTO

Howard Sherman's "Guidelines for an ah-hah moment."

After Houston painter Howard Sherman's first solo museum exhibition opened at Beaumont's Art Museum of Southeast Texas in fall 2008, it was supposed to travel to the Galveston Arts Center. But Hurricane Ike changed those plans.

Now a modified version of the show, *Eating Your Friction*, is wrapping up its final week at a modified version of the GAC, which remains in a temporary space as repairs continue on its Strand building.

Gone are the largest paintings. At more than 9 feet tall, they're too big for the GAC to accommodate, which is too bad, because Sherman's explosive style lends itself to the most generous scale possible. Fortunately, the Market Street space is flooded with natural light, and outstanding canvases like the title piece — a torrent of splashy gestures, precise lines and cartoon characters whose layers of history are barely shrouded by foggy *pentimenti* — already look like classics.

Another plus: GAC curator Clint Willour has replaced the missing works with more recent ones. He's also included several brand-new paintings. If they are representative of his current progress, then Sherman — who tends to incorporate his cartooning background into his ever-evolving synthesis of historical abstract painting strategies — seems to be veering back toward recognizable imagery after a period of relegating it to subordinate roles.

Subnormal behavior could be a portrait of a warriorlike figure whose weapon of choice seems to be his finger-pointing gloved hand. It has many wonderful abstract passages — a splashy swoosh of green paint against a black background, for example — in which painting and drawing read primarily as mark making. But they play supporting roles, reinforcing the overall sense that we're looking at a figure. In works from 2008, by contrast, figurative passages support a resolutely nonrepresentational image.

Then again, Sherman never settles into one tactic for long, so I may be detecting a pattern where none exists. If he decides to try working in series, however, I hope he uses the black-and-white *Guidelines for an ah-hah moment* as a starting point. Spare yet muscular, it achieves more depth and has more of a diagrammed, even architectural feel than anything else in the show. It gives a taste of what Sherman can do without resorting to color, which turns out to be a lot.

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Resources

EATING YOUR FRICTION

- **When:** 11 a.m.-5 p.m. May 20-23
- **Where:** Galveston Arts Center in Exile 2, 2501 Market, Galveston; 409-763-2403

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