

Cynthia Mosser

Augen

Portland

Finessing the line between nature and artifice, Cynthia Mosser infuses her works on panel and paper with luxuriant floral imagery. For the panel pieces (all 2006), the artist layered paint, gesso, encaustic, and collage elements to form a kind of geological record, exposing strata teeming with fossil-like botanical impressions.

In *Succulent Puff II*, a backdrop of ovals in green, brown, honey mustard, and maroon establishes a matrix of order, while an amoebic white squiggle squirms on the surface, balancing the geometric rigor with gestural freedom. Interlaced among these motifs are pentimenti resembling fleurs-de-lis. *Swim Puff (cowboy)* and *Swim Puff (mojito)* dispense with the grounding ovals, giving over the picture plane to an unbridled, free-form fantasia of shapes suggestive of lakes,



Cynthia Mosser, *Swim Puff (cowboy)*, 2006, mixed media/encaustic on panel, 12" x 12". Augen.

swimming pools, thought bubbles, and cartoons. This stylistic *mélange* updates primordial vegetative sprawl with a sense of midcentury whimsy—part Paleozoic, part Palm Springs.

When Mosser takes up gouache, however, she loses the visual and metaphoric layering so vital to her mixed-media works, and the swirly patterns read as pure decoration: fanciful on the cusp of cloying. In one work, pastel circles rendered in tentative scrawls are piled atop one another like so many scoops of ice cream, but in the two-part study *Puff Paradise* and *Puff Paradise II*, Mosser returns to her more self-assured vegetational motifs.

This body of work did not fail to entertain, but Mosser seemed to be in transition. The wild blending of eco-rococo with contemporary graphic is poised just short of coalescence. —Richard Speer

