

September 20, 2018

Hammering out the Details of Abby Leigh's New Painting Show

by Jarrett Earnest



Image courtesy of: Johannes Vogt

The first shot of Fellini's *Satyricon* (1969) is a closeup textured surface. The camera pulls back to reveal a web of scratches, crude drawings and the shadow of a man. A passionate voiceover begins: "Listen, the earth could not bury me. The sea could not smother me, rage and storm though she might..." which continues with images of the protagonist, Encolpio, framed by the carvings. The set was made by artist Antonio Scordia, who said, "When Fellini asked me to paint the wall, I painted it as a place where every Roman had left a sign of his passage."

This scene came to mind while looking at Abby Leigh's new paintings – works like *Sea Life*, *Nervous Condition*, and *Competitive Skies*, all from this year. Leigh's process begins by beating a Dibond aluminum panels with a sledgehammer, covering them with dents and dings. From there she layers oil paint, pigment and wax in a range of near monochromes – pinks, blues, and blacks. Leigh then turns her attention to nascent shapes on the battered surface – scratching lines out of the undulating plane, following its topography, in a technique that harkens to automatism. Sometimes she paints over and into these forms. Other colors are revealed as she cuts into the glittering metal, which is left exposed. It all adds up. The resulting paintings have an all-over composition, like bacteria floating in swamp water, or an elegantly graffitied wall. They beg for free association.