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SMALL CHARMS

If it's ambition-free art you crave, the paintings of Sue Chenoweth, the subject of an exhibition at the CUE Art Foundation, will float your boat. That's not an entirely qualitative distinction: There's something to be said for an art of small moments. Ms. Chenoweth's layered compendiums of rude doodles, collaged cutouts and arrant splatters of acrylic give body to private, all but inarticulate reveries. The images – that is, when they haven't been obscured by Ms. Chenoweth's sanded and scuffed surfaces – can be childlike (women sticking out their tongues), schematic (shambling, fantastic architecture), decorative (geometric cutouts) or weirdly reverent (cartoonish scenes of material and sexual excess hinting at a Bible-thumping righteousness).

None of it adds up to much, which may be the point. Trading in half-remembered sensations, Ms. Chenoweth errs on the side of the nebulous. The three best pieces, seen on the east wall of the gallery, bring some measure of clarity and structure to an overabundance of imagery, ambiguity and pictorial incident. Unfortunately, they hang adjacent to *The Rich Man* (2005), a lumpish wall painting crafted from Wikki Stix, a waxy, thread-like and altogether unappealing substance. Painters who capitulate to the installation aesthetic only underscore the belief that painting, somehow, isn't good enough. I don't think that was Ms. Chenoweth's intention, yet it's enough to prompt qualms about the work's unkempt charms.

Sue Chenoweth is at the CUE Art Foundation, 511 West 25th Street, until March 12.