

WEEKEND Arts FINE ARTS LEISURE

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Juan Gomez Lee Baxter Davis

CUE Art Foundation
511 West 25th Street, Chelsea
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In his goofy and seductive paintings of female nudes, Juan Gomez does a nimble, high-low balancing act. The low part is the nude, which Mr. Gomez renders in a simplified style more appropriate for underground comic art than for traditional fine painting. With elongated, tubular limbs and torsos, oversize hands and feet and an emphasis on erogenous parts – lips, nipples and genitalia – they are like sexy balloon sculptures. On the other hand, Mr. Gomez is attentive to the physical and abstract dimensions of painting. Using wide brushes with insouciant immediacy, he paints his figures on medium-large, squarish canvases, folding and bending their legs and arms to create compositions that are at once expansive and compressive. Thinly yet sensuously painted, the pictures glow like watercolors, and they call to mind artists like Bonnard and Alex Katz.

But satiric humor fortunately prevails over more high-minded purposes, especially in a set of small, multifigure watercolors that are

more formally transformative, more sexually explicit and funnier.

The other exhibition at CUE presents works on paper by Lee Baxter Davis, a skillful draftsman and watercolorist who recently retired from a 30-year teaching career at Texas A&M Commerce, formerly East Texas State University. With brush and mostly black and gray ink, Mr. Davis creates comical, bizarre and exhaustingly complicated allegorical narratives in an antiquarian style influenced by artists like Hieronymous Bosch, William Blake and the Pre-Raphaelites. Mr. Davis's work is fusty and overbearingly portentous, but its cosmic fervor is compelling.

KEN JOHNSON