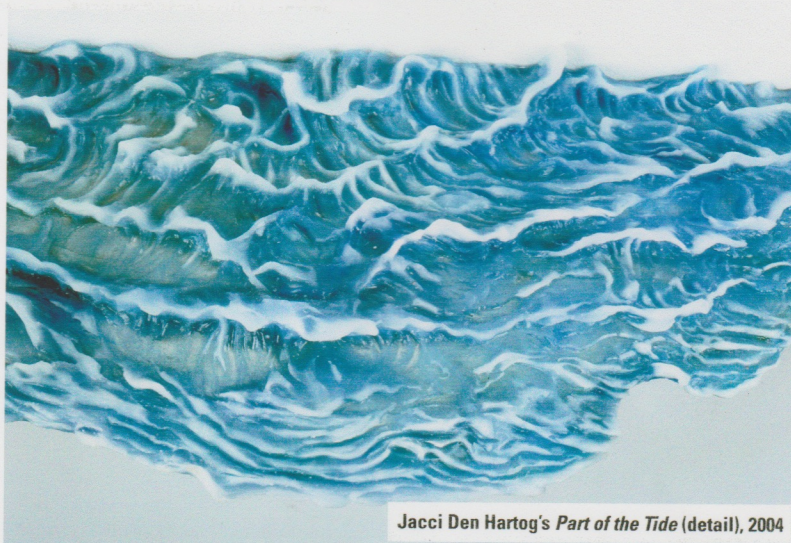


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ART PICK OF THE WEEK



Jacci Den Hartog's *Part of the Tide* (detail), 2004

## JACCI DEN HARTOG, PETER HOPKINS

You would think that continuing refinement would compromise the viscosity of Jacci Den Hartog's polyurethane sculptures. After all, as inexact but exacting replications of natural phenomena, Den Hartog's objects supposedly inhere nature's inchoate power, even intensifying it by shrinking these phenomena down to deceptively "handleable" size. But what happens is that, by seemingly freezing, reducing and excerpting trees, rocks and (in this show) torrents of water, Den Hartog subjects them to a peculiar artifice whose very incongruity points dramatically at the raw power that *could* be there. Hers is a bonsai art, designed not to tame the wild but to demonstrate the futility of such taming in its very exactitude. And, of course, as "landscape sculpture," Den Hartog's artwork explores the conceptual space between landscape painting and the landscape being painted — a weirder, more surreal space than you might imagine, where, thanks to slippages in our own perception, her freestanding rapids and wall-mounted waves breaking on a nonexistent shore inspire powerful vertigo.

A similarly sly and nasty physicality drives Peter Hopkins' abstract paintings. Their formal vacuity and contrasting optical beauty, even seductiveness, argues with and bemoans the supposed "end" — or at least endgame — of painting, much as Gerhard Richter's work does. But Hopkins' paintings are not empty of content — or at least contents. Fabricated with "social fluids" that have been applied "over" (as opposed to the usual "on") canvas, the three luminous surfaces on view here also incorporate sheer fabric, reflective holographic foil, and medical, industrial and domestic materials — stuff that you'd expect to be stashed in a utility closet, not hanging out in a painter's studio. But Hopkins has been goosing the art-life boundary for a while now, constantly asking himself, and us, what comprises that boundary, whether life drives art or vice versa, or even whether such a boundary is integral or inimical to human perception. End of painting, indeed. At Christopher Grimes Gallery, 916 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica; Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.-5:30 p.m.; thru Sept. 4. (310) 587-3373.

—Peter Frank