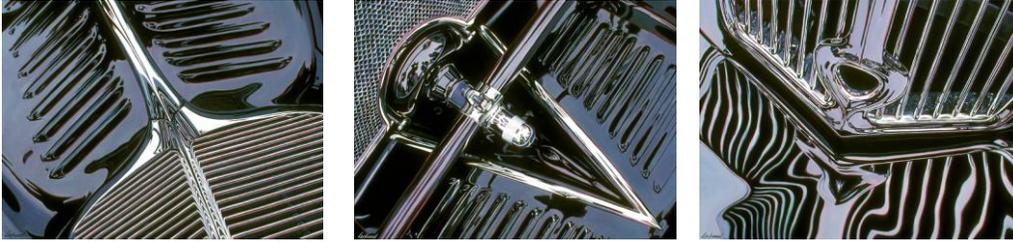


NEW PAINT JOBS: Lory Lockwood's photorealist auto paintings are so realistic they become abstract

By Doug MacCash

Art critic



Lockwood's best paintings are also her most abstract.

Lory Lockwood's new exhibit, "**Images of Desire**" at Jonathan Ferrara Gallery, is a clarion call to chrome lovers. Her seductive photorealist canvases of high-priced cars and high-speed motorcycles invite us into the Alice-in-Wonderland-worlds of mirror-polished hub caps, custom exhaust pipes and those pouncing silver felines on the hoods of Jaguars. Lockwood is obsessed with the way a waxed fender or pinstriped gas tank will capture the clouds, sky and surrounding landscape, bending the scenery into strange psychedelic patterns and tinting the myriad hues of nature to the tone of a factory paint job. "Images of Desire" is a dream come true for the vehicle-crazed.

But beneath Lockwood's obvious auto obsession, there's an even greater obsession with oil paint and fine brushes. She laboriously reproduces each reflective swirl and metallic glint perfectly, creating patterns that, when viewed closely, become intricate abstractions.

In fact, Lockwood is at her best when concentrating on the abstract nature of her work. Her three most recent paintings, "Vintage Chrome Reflection," "Vintage Chrome Charger" and "Vintage Chrome Grill," are the most difficult pieces in the show to understand, but they're also the most interesting. Though the three large canvases are clearly based on close-ups of a classic automobile, they also dissolve into gorgeously unresolved oil-on-water designs of plum, Coke-bottle green and blood red.

"Images of Desire" is a triumph, but there's still room for Lockwood to grow. Part of the appeal of photorealism (a form of realism based on the nature of photographs, not nature) is the sheer manic labor involved in creating such highly detailed, illusionistic paintings. Look closely at Lockwood's oils and you'll discover a dizzying skein of feathery Degas-like brush strokes that imply hours and hours of tedious labor.

Some of the classic 1970s photorealists made things even harder on themselves by inventing mechanical techniques that went beyond traditional painting. Don Eddy created his astounding still lifes by layering needle-thin airbrush strokes of pure primary color. Chuck Close created huge portraits of friends, using only his inky thumb print to render the image. Malcolm Morley painted his complicated snap-shot-like images upside down (the canvases, not the artist), so that they remained pure mechanical exercises.

Lockwood obviously courts the how-on-earth-did-she-do-that aspect of photorealism. The question is, can she push the artistic envelope even further?



As the name implies, photorealism is a style of painting based on photographs not nature. Look very closely and you can see artist Lory Lockwood reflected (far left) in the hub cap in her painting “Porsche on Porsche” as she takes the photo upon which the painting is based.