

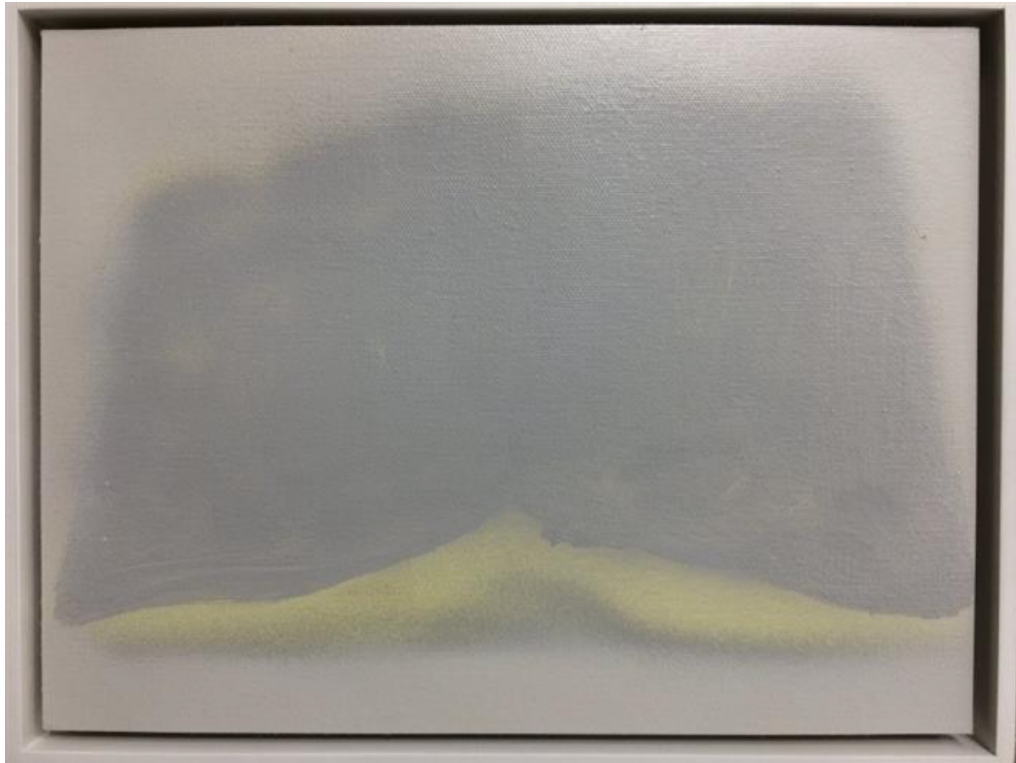
HESSE FLATOW

Koeppel, Fredric. "Artist Kevin Ford elevated common objects in Tops Gallery show." *Commercial Appeal*. Online. March 29, 2016.

commercial appeal

VISUAL ARTS

Artist Kevin Ford elevates common objects in Tops Gallery show



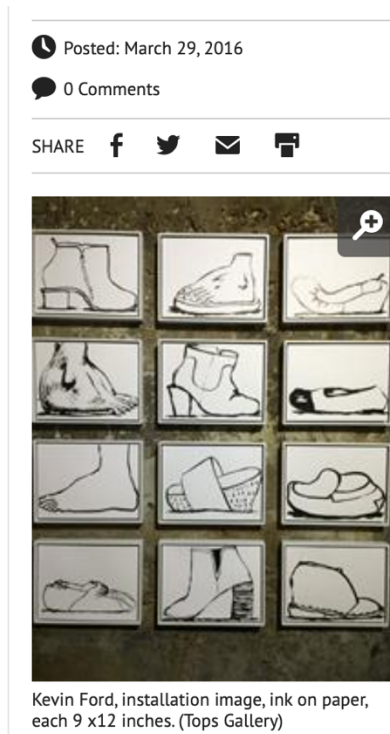
Kevin Ford, "Moleskin (Gray)," acrylic on canvas, 9 x 12 inches. (Tops Gallery)

By Fredric Koeppel, Special to The Commercial Appeal

The great mystery of art lies in the process by which an artist uses a medium — oil or acrylic paints, pen and ink, pencil — and distributes it on a surface, which could be canvas, panel or paper, and imbues the object depicted with such an aura of unimpeachable experiential thereness that it affects not merely the viewer's sensibility but the memory and the day itself. From carafes of wine in Dutch still-life paintings to Cezanne's apples to Warhol's soup cans, artists for hundreds of years have taken the reality of mundane artifacts and raised them a state of a supreme awareness that seems to run both directions.

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I felt that way about the small painting of a chocolate glazed doughnut by Kevin Ford that was included in the group exhibition "Cops," that ran at Tops Gallery in January and February. Now, in a solo show, "A Piece Is Loose," at Tops through April 9, Ford has a chance to expand his reach. While the main gallery is devoted to eight paintings, several quite large and the others close to tiny, most of the work consists of ink on paper drawings that measure 9-by-12-inches, horizontal or vertical.

Twelve of these drawings, arranged in a grid, involve feet and shoes, almost to a fetishistic extent, though the undercurrent of wit keeps us from willfully

delving into any psychological morass. These drawings, and the others in the front room, indulge in feats of hyperbole that will remind viewers of Philip Guston's late cartoonlike work or the comic books of R. Crumb, with their bulbous shapes and exaggerated appendages. Unlike those artists, however, Ford eliminates even the hint of narrative from his pieces, focusing solely and closely on the object at hand, as it were.

Shoes and feet show up in two colossal oil on canvas paintings, titled, of course, "Shoe" — 50-by-67.5-inches — and "Foot (Pink)", tipping the scale at 72-by-57.5-inches. The shoe is a giant brown platform style, posed against a brushy light blue background, while the foot is, yes, a humongous pink foot and lower leg in all their hot, feral, monumental glory.

Most impressive, though, are five small acrylic on linen paintings that attain, in their singular concentration and vision — like that darn chocolate glazed doughnut — a level of transcendent idealism. These portray, again in tight

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close-up, an "Etruscan" vase, a gray shoe, a vase with flower decorations and two "moleskins," tan and gray. (The famous little notebooks, as many people know, are called Moleskine, and they contain no skins of small furry ground-mammals.) There is a point at which we look at a painting from inches away and see that it consists of a few blurry brush-strokes and swathes of pigment that, as we back off, coalesce into a recognizable object that, despite its known shape and employment, functions as the reflection of its own existence. This is the sphere where beauty inhabits the spaces of pure form.

Kevin Ford, "A Piece Is Loose"

Tops Gallery through April 9

400 S. Front, entrance on Huling

Email info@topsgallery.com