

Volk, Gregory, "Ingrid Calame," *Art in America*, March 2014.

Art in America

templates, which he then altered and recontextualized. The tools Robak uses theoretically allow for the creation of compelling, visionary worlds of infinite diversity, so it's remarkable that the artist sticks to found pixels processed with standardized effects in programs like Photoshop and Cinema 4D. Although far from carrying out a "deskilled" process, Robak largely confines himself to exploring the conventional forms that have already solidified around "Next-Gen" equipment. Creativity becomes synonymous with customization, and the artist's hand is visible mostly in exaggerated surface effects: one more layer of lush digital moisture or that extra cascade of sparkles.

The theorist Alexander Galloway makes a distinction between works of cinema and multiplayer digital games, with the former depicting worlds and the latter simulating them. Some of Robak's most exciting pieces draw from the second tradition, exploring environments from a first-person perspective. The most promising piece here is the seven-screen installation *Xenix*, which could be called a depiction of a simulation. We watch as an artificial intelligence navigates an elaborate interface to select weapons, chart some sort of transnational movement (a military operation?) and check the home fridge. We may be only passive viewers, but the work's surfeit of detail makes for a more engaging experience than most "interactive" bouts of repetitive pawing at a touchscreen. In *Xenix*, digital space is understood not simply as a 3-D confection separate from life but as a fluid site where virtual activities may flow seamlessly into acts of real violence, like a drone strike, or instantaneous consumption.

—William S. Smith

INGRID CALAME James Cohan

Ingrid Calame's luscious, seemingly abstract paintings and drawings incorporate tracings of gritty urban surfaces made on-site, among them graffiti and stains around the Los Angeles River, tire tracks at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway and cracked pavement in Buffalo, New York. Often working on Mylar and aluminum panels, Calame has more recently explored the centuries-old technique of pounce

View of Ingrid Calame's *Indianapolis Motor Speedway Pits #4, #7, #9, #26, #32, #33, #35, #37, #39, #40*, 2013, pigment on wall, approx. 13 by 42 by 30 feet; at James Cohan.



transfer, for which powdered pigment is pushed through a perforated drawing to help create a replica of the original image on a different surface. For this exhibition, that surface was the wall, with two marvelous examples.

The iconic Indianapolis Motor Speedway has engaged Calame since 2006, when the Indianapolis Museum of Art and its then-curator Lisa Freiman commissioned her to create a series of paintings based on local sites. *Indianapolis Motor Speedway Pits #4, #7, #9, #26, #32, #33, #35, #37, #39, #40* (2013) wrapped around the four white walls of the gallery's primary space, incorporating tire tracks and skid marks as jutting, slanting, vibrantly colored forces. Multiple layers of forms and hues, from vivid pinks to deep greens to soft yellow washes, make for a pulsating work that scrambles distinctions between abstraction and representation. While convincing as representations of the marks they trace, they are also both abstract and suggestive of brain waves and cosmic events, cartography and topography, even vast landscapes seen from a satellite's height. Step to the middle of the room, and the whole work seems to be coursing and wheeling around you, with its broad, angular, multicolored swaths. Step up close, and those swaths fragment into thousands of radiant squiggles, notations and miniature landforms, with the whiteness of the walls shining through. Enthralling for the viewer, this work is a fascinating interplay between cohesion and collapse. Calame has long gravitated toward humble and unremarkable remains of the past, still lingering but subject to erosion and disappearance. Now, her new, big wall works are likewise ephemeral, destroyed once removed: disappearance and, implicitly, mortality are encoded in these works.

For more than a century, the Speedway—call it an American Colosseum—has been home to automobile races, competitive spectacles filled with triumphs and mishaps, exhilaration and disasters, keyed-up life and, occasionally, shocking death. All of this is seeded into Calame's reeling, yet quiescent and meditative, work, which both celebrates and transforms the raw marks left by hurtling cars. *Arcelor Mittal Steel Shipping Building No 1 Right #231-236, #267-281* (2013), executed on black walls in the back gallery, felt much more somber. As your eyes adjust, you notice iridescent, yet vaguely apparitional, blocks arrayed on the walls, featuring the sequential numbers of the title. These are from tracings of old stenciled numbers on the floor of a once thriving, but now shuttered, steel factory in Buffalo: yet another economic blow to the beleaguered Rust Belt. Commonplace directional numbers, once routinely seen and used by generations of workers, are clearly disintegrating, but they also glow, shine and seem wondrous, like refulgent constellations in the night sky. Approaching weathered urban surfaces as found drawings, and working those surfaces into her art, Calame embraces creation and decay, regeneration and entropy. Two lively oil-on-aluminum paintings also in the show are based on tarred-over Buffalo pavement fractures—here colorful, curving and somewhat ragged bands. You would never think that mere repaired cracks could have such vitality.

—Gregory Volk