

## **There are Floating, Fabulous Sculptures at Cris Worley Fine Arts, in William Cannings' Soft Cell**

By Betsy Lewis

The sculptor William Cannings is a professor at Texas Tech, but he has a long history with Cris Worley going back to her days at Pan American Art Projects. That an Englishman as accomplished as Cannings ended up in Lubbock instead of New York may seem like a fluke or a cruel twist of fate, but his working process is as brawny as Texas itself, and more than a little bit risk-prone.



*Ascend/Descend* 2012

His show *Soft Cell*, at Cris Worley Fine Arts, pops with a cool, rhythmic style willing to go out on a limb to excellent result: dazzling sculptures that seem suspended in thin air.

In the front space of the gallery, you think you're standing in a room full of inventive balloons. The works reveal a swell interplay of light and color on shiny puffy objects, either on the floor or hung on the wall, beginning with "Ascend/Descend" (2012).

But the enticing amusement park aspects of the work are totally deceptive. The pieces are inflated, but their buoyancy comes from pressure and heat inside a cavity of steel that's coated in automotive paint. Cannings spiritually inherits the materials of John Chamberlain, the late American artist who made big crushed



*Serpentine* 2012

sculptures from old automobiles, and turns them into a summery garden of love and lightness.

That's a lot to ask of materials that thought they'd grow up to be a car, and sometimes imperfections happen. "Serpentine" looks suspended off the floor, slithering up the wall. Look closely and you may find a tiny corner, thick and flattened, that did not expand as expected. Ms. Worley said it hit the side of the kiln, and that Cannings embraces these unexpected happenstances of his process.

On the floor in front of "Serpentine" is "Grab," a sculpture that's sensually confusing because your eyes will swear it's rubber while your fingertips say it's steel, plus it looks like it's peeling a layer, or shedding a skin. Cannings takes advantage of the sweet, encouraging themes of childhood, pandering to his finely articulated sense of shape. His work's serene appearance juxtaposed with startling textures are surprising and magical, an oasis in a bustling city.

William Cannings' *Soft Cell* is on view at Cris Worley Fine Arts through January 5, 2013.