
Cleverly complementing each other, Donnie Molls’ and Scott McMillin’s exhibitions both focused on the quintessentially American - and Angeleno - image and culture of the automobile. Needing to say something new about this familiar subject of social and artistic discourse, both rose to the occasion. Indeed, both were able to claim it as their own. Molls is concerned with the image and presence of the car in the quotidian landscape - although what he infers is that the car creates its own landscape, determines its own space through its ubiquity in our lives, and that “car space” ultimately takes the form of junkyards, not freeways. Molls in fact considers auto-culture from the vantage point of its physicality, painting with garish, car-customizing colors on steel or even on pistons (individually and in groups). His images are pulled from the urban landscape, but isolate the heaps of discarded autobody and tires from their common spaces, rendering them instead like Pop icons against the flat brilliance of the colors they used to bear. (The images seem to originate in photographs but are hand-painted.) Apotheosized as such, these mounds of metal and ersatz rubber take on a tragic monumentality; you almost imagine the rusting hulks carcasses in some sort of mass slaughter. Molls furthers the poignant poetry of his imagery by rendering some of the piles from closer range - finding an accidental architecture in the stacking - and others from a great distance, whereby they become veritable mountains. For his part, McMillin transforms the very substance of cars, fabricating intricately layered abstractions from salvaged autobody parts. The Parts display evidence of use and degradation, but these panel and bumper segments have been set into one another with a care bordering on elegance, resulting in geometric compositions flavored, you might say, with age. In this retro fashion McMillin harks back to the work of proto-Pop assemblagists such as John Chamberlain and (early) Ed Kienholz, making subtle commentary about the carishness of contemporary society while playing along with its pretense at order. Then again, McMillin is truly sensitive to the sabe no wabe of modern junk.