



## Graham Gillmore: Monte Clark Gallery

[ArtForum](#), [March, 2008](#) by [Dan Adler](#)

THANKS FOR NOTHING-NESS: The words are carved in rounded block letters, into a glossy, enamel-painted wooden panel. True to its word, Graham Gillmore's *Thanks for Nothing (Ness)*, 2007, features ... nothing else. But despite the dearth of imagery, there is plenty of visual interest here: in the controlled aggression of the excavated picture plane, in the delicate shadows cast within each letter, and in the tiny dots that result from the heat emitted by the artist's router. All these features lend an unexpected gravitas to the otherwise dismissive phrase, the sarcastic tone of the underlined "nothing" enriched by the potential earnestness signaled by its existentialist association with "-ness."

Gillmore's text paintings speak more voluminously, however, when composed with vibrant color and abstract motifs, and at a scale evocative of advertising signage. In *Wash Away Yovr Tears*, 2007, a strategic typo and slightly uneven spacing of letters suggest a semantic playfulness that is supported by the white and red lines, cloudy white blobs, and blue amoeboid shapes that surround it. They are reminiscent of the soapy residue left by household cleansers. But the amoebas also suggest a close-up of some bodily fluid, perhaps the tears of the title. Indeed, a more sexual reading is supported by the phallic rigidity of the routed text, though feelings of abject messiness are subdued by the application of a shiny enamel veneer, which serves to return the depicted words to the impersonal realm of the marketing slogan.

The coolness of corporate culture is further evoked in *Good Question But I'm Sorry We're Out of Time*, 2007, a line that immediately evokes evasive boardroom maneuvering. Here, the text competes with rectilinear and ovoid forms--rendered in pink, forest green, and maroon--that appear to bleed into and saturate the pictorial field in ways that metaphorically suggest the viral spread of

the tortured moralities associated with the language of capitalism; the mildly repellent discharge set alongside a penile shape, for example, seems to be a dig at the sexism of corporate language, although the significance of this motif is enriched by lustrous oil and enamel finishes, implying the traditionally feminized context of ceramic craft.

The artist's perception of a spread and saturation of ethical indifference may be further located in the cynical statements made by works such as *Trash the Planet*, 2007, and the diptych *No Really It's Over You Win*, 2007, the latter rendered mostly in an arresting array of bloody red stains. Biographical anecdotes serve to broaden this negative orientation, as in the case of *Half of Everything*, 2006, which alludes to the artist's ongoing and bitter divorce proceedings. But the striking luminosity and luster of Gillmore's color schemes often strike a note of ambivalence, so that there always seems to be a glimmer of hope, rather than a mere fatalistic recitation of the writing on the wall.