

lion-pelt rug scattered with trash. If Dodge's imaginary hotel was once an escape from the frantic vulgarities of the real world, it has itself become vulgar, yet another place to escape from. The leftovers have been put on display, titled either directly—*Chairs, Plants, Table Tennis*—or obliquely: *As You Understand, I Will No Longer Write You* (that's the lion rug, but it sounds to me more like a Michel Legrand song).

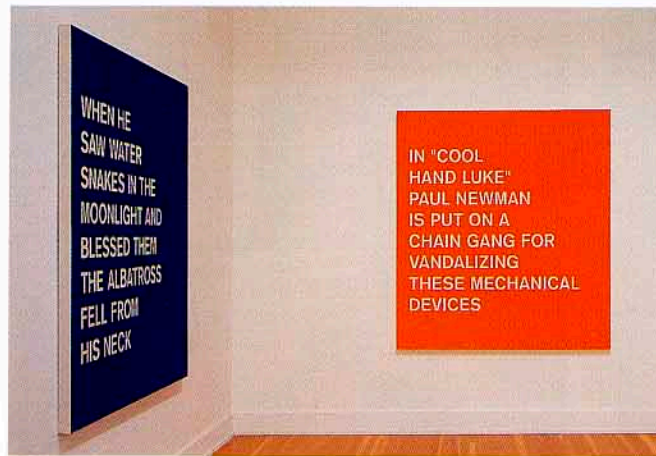
Dodge has intelligence and talent and a meaningful sense of what it might be like to be Roger Vadim, updated. Though it's telling that the only authentic human drama he enacted amid the leavings of his bored resort refugees came in the form of an old-fashioned telegram, acting as the show's invitation/title. "It did not feel impossible *stop*," it begins. (But possibility is precisely what this show needed.) "How long can we do this *stop*," it ends. (Not much longer, if you ask me.) There are entire mountains of something missing in Dodge's work. White space is key. Absence is presence. Longing is an acute reminder of having had. Love is loss. Misery is a mirror. Lazy, fugitive entitlement leaves behind a summer palace filled with beautiful stuff. And maybe you run your hand across it. And that's really all there is.

MATTHEW DEBORD

RON TERADA

CATRIONA JEFFRIES GALLERY, VANCOUVER
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Art is supposed to pose questions, not give answers, right? But Ron Terada turns the tired truism on its head with a series of crisp, penetrating monochrome text paintings whose overt subject matter consists of clues from the TV show *Jeopardy*, the game that turned the distinction between questions and answers inside out. You remember: in challenging the contestants' familiarity with information from far-flung fields of knowledge, the conceit was that the clues were given in the form of answers, so the players had to phrase their responses—to all intents and purposes, their answers—in the form of questions. Terada says that in his paintings all the answers (or are they questions?) are readymades taken directly from real shows, though there's something mind-boggling in the idea that its producers came up with anything as *recherché* as "Professional name of the punk



RON TERADA, *Untitled (Jeopardy Paintings)*, 1999, acrylic on raw canvas, 65.25 x 58 in. Photo Chris Gergley. Courtesy Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver.

rocker born James Jewel Osterberg it sounds like a weird soft drink" (winning answer/question: "What is Iggy Pop?").

By now there is a long tradition of such pure text paintings, starting perhaps with On Kawara's date paintings and moving on through Richard Prince's jokes to Kay Rosen's puns. As those examples suggest, the genre as a whole makes an issue of the way subject matter becomes a formal element. Such works are limited to specific linguistic forms because only they allow what the painting says to reflect back on what it is—its semiotics to implicate its ontology. The elements of Terada's 1998-99 *Jeopardy Paintings*, beyond the specifics of text and color, are identical (eight unpunctuated flush-left lines of one to three words each in sans serif typeface displayed as raw canvas surrounded by a single opaque, uninflected shade of acrylic paint). But the contents of the text—not so much the sense of each one as its reference—identify the paintings as corresponding to distinct genres. For instance, the Iggy Pop painting is a kind of portrait, a genre with which Terada has toyed before, in his 1996-97 *Grey Paintings*, each of which presented a name from his high-school yearbook along with the motto the person chose to be remembered by. Other *Jeopardy Paintings* can be considered history, landscape, or genre paintings, not to mention those of mixed type (for

instance, the one reading "General Richard Montgomery was killed December 31 1775 leading a hopeless attack on this Canadian city" would be history if one imagines the accent on the action, landscape if the focus widens to emphasize the setting, Quebec).

Terada's paintings are witty, oblique, and deadpan, but they are also animated by a discreet sensuality, apparent not just in their vehement color but especially in their unusual surface texture. Oddly, the nap of the canvas stands out perpendicularly from its weave, like goose bumps on someone's skin. The paintings are flat and factual, and then again, from another viewpoint, they seem charged with inexplicable nervous electricity, perhaps like game show contestants who think they're on the verge of striking it rich. As social commentary, these paintings are inevitably bleak—why do we find entertainment in the reduction of knowledge to disconnected bits of useless information anyway?—but as form, they take an almost euphoric delight in the understatedly inventive, slightly kooky torsions of thought required to negotiate a hopelessly banal culture, and in the opportunities they are thereby afforded to pose some unexpected answers to the prize-winning questions: What is a painting? What is it about? And what's the relation between those two things?

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