



Ivan Morley's multi media paintings record the idiosyncratic histories of anonymous small-town California, places which seem to have had less than noteworthy pasts. His works also mark the passing of time by documenting the artist's creative output in the process of making each work, mark by mark, or in some cases, stitch by stitch. In this way, Morley's work comments on the way in which history is constructed by the present moment, always a retelling that transforms the story, distancing it from the original event. However, the histories Morley presents, inspired as they are by the activities of local squirrels, memorable cockfights, or the explosion in "Bill's Asphaltum-Camphene Lab" of 1850, are more evidently products of the artist's roving imagination than the reality of Los Angeles's mid nineteenth century past. Taking on the traditions of visual narrative and oral storytelling in terms of content, materials and technique, Morley has created a body of work that is both complex and visually intriguing.

Morley's painting, or "poetic myth objects," as he calls them, are constructed from a concoction of oil paint and a variety of visceral materials that wouldn't seem out of place in a work by Paul McCarthy. KY jelly, soap, wax and varnish are skillfully manipulated with paint to form brightly colored images on top of a myriad of surfaces, from canvas and glass to wood panels and batik. The work's material diversity is echoed by a variety of content and style, with some paintings bearing text and figurative elements while others remain abstract or pattern based. Morley often displays a series of paintings alongside a few lines of anecdotal information written by hand and pinned to the wall; these texts relate to the works, but do not provide a strict guide or formula. For example, *Logo*, 2004, depicts three masked squirrels and the words "Clifford Still Real Estate" written backwards as if painted on a storefront window viewed from inside. The work is in fact a solid piece of paint that was done in reverse on glass and then removed and placed on a panel. The imagery of the painting loosely relates to some gossip that Morley heard as a child regarding the death of a family friend who had studied under the painter Clifford Still. When the widow called Clifford Still to report the death of his student, the painter had supposedly remarked that he was now more interested in real estate than art. **O.F.**

From Don, George, Diane, 2004
oil, wax, KY jelly on
canvas over panel,
60" x 80"
photo: Josh White

opposite:
Logo, 2004
oil, wax, KY jelly on
panel, 24" x 25"
photo: Josh White