

# ART NEW ENGLAND

CONTEMPORARY ART AND CULTURE

*Carol Gove: Lineage*

Judi Rotenberg Gallery, Boston, MA

[www.judirotenberg.com](http://www.judirotenberg.com)

Through October 11, 2009

*Lineage*, Carol Gove's solo exhibition, features mixed-media works that examine the elusiveness of ancestry. The work, which is reminiscent of Kurt Schwitters, Richard Diebenkorn, and Helen Fankenthaler, recapitulates formal interests in abstraction and geometry, in translucence and layering, and in delicately wrought and built surfaces. But the images in *Lineage* also signal a more overtly personal excavation in progress: swatches of personally suggestive ephemera—text, photos, ad copy, and handwritten documents—are strategically collaged into this new work.

Paintings like *Composure* and *Dinner Party* point to Gove's ambiguous place not only within her own family line, but within that of women artists in general. Both pieces contain found materials that are cropped, reversed, painted over, and otherwise secreted within the formal compositions. For instance, just off *Composure's* center and buried beneath a layer of neutral, pale pigment is the ghostly presence of a sewing pattern. There is also a fragment of a word (*nona*), as in Picasso's word *jou*, that eludes us. We stand before the picture, puzzling over the presence of a *nona* or grandmother—denizen of a bygone world of handcrafts and feminine arts—is both the subtext and the conflict of this picture. After all, a work like *Composure* is impossibly positioned between feminized bourgeois society and the patriarchal world of high art. As such, Gove interrogates the relationship of polite, self-effacing *composure* and assertive *composition*. In a closely related picture, *Dinner Party*, Gove's allusion to Judy Chicago's icon of feminism confirms this theme and teases out more of the questions posed in *Composure*. Here Gove suggests that what we know about dinner parties comes not only from our mothers and grandmothers, but from the familiar ventriloquies of our "other" mothers: artists like Virginia Woolf and Judy Chicago. In *Lineage*, Gove puts us before a palimpsest that is by its very nature cryptic and melancholy. Looking into the work, we think of the faces of children that sometimes turn spectral in their ability to manifest and conceal the features of dimly known forebears.

– Rane Hall

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