

ART

‘Methods’ to his dissonance

By David Pagel

Restlessness and dissatisfaction go hand in glove and both spill from Chris Oatey’s second solo show at CB1 Gallery. “Performing Methods” includes crudely crafted sculptures made of paper, string and paint that have been sliced in half and ripped open, as well as abstract paintings whose seemingly free gestures have been made with spray-painted stencils.

On the upside, Oatey’s low-tech pieces are approachable and unpretentious, no better or worse, than anything anyone else might make with the rudimentary materials and processes he favors. At a time when self-satisfaction seems to have replaced self-reflection, it’s heartening to see an artist who is not infatuated with everything he does.



On the downside, it’s not especially satisfying to be around works made by someone more interested in processes than in the results they deliver. Most of Oatey’s works are made in media and via methods that do not accomplish what they are supposed to. The dissonance is intentional. But it wears thin.

In an adjoining gallery, “Performing Methods — In Context” suggests that Oatey may be a better curator than an artist. The six-artist exhibition he has organized more effectively balances the openness of ongoing processes with the closure of completed pieces. Intriguing works by Marc Philip van Kempen, Pascual Sisto and Maria Walker show Oatey to be an astute judge of other artists’ achievements.