

ANNE CONNELL: RECENT  
PAINTINGS

At: *Miller Block Gallery, 14 Newbury St.,  
through Wednesday*

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Anne Connell dwells in the visions of Renaissance art, extricating details and heraldic patterns and putting them together like a jigsaw puzzle to create enigmatic, surrealist paintings.

Her show at the Miller Block Gallery also ties past to present, using gold leaf to both reference history and draw the eye to the picture plane — a 20th-century twist, reminding us that we are not entering a world of myth and history, but merely considering how we construct and deconstruct that world according to our own needs.

“The Purity of Sentiment” shows the draped bottom half of a figure and a white rabbit, lifted from Francesco del Cossa’s 15th-century fresco, “The Cour of Borso d’Este under the Sign of Venus.” A pearlescent white heraldic pattern fades to the right. The painting is virtually white-on-white. The rabbit gives the image an Alice in Wonderland feel. Connell never paints a whole figure, only the lower parts, denying us the chance to relate, leaving us in limbo as to whether this is about form or story.

It’s about both. Connell’s small worlds intrigue and provoke with their tiny details and their ambitious concerns. She’s not painting to answer questions, but to ask them.