

DATEBOOK

Saturday

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**Kenneth
Baker**
Galleries

Reichman and Beech at Anglim: We have seen little of Bay Area painter Brett Reichman's work in recent years. The complexity and high finish of his pictures at Anglim tell why: He spares no effort to perfect them. The confessional air, real or feigned, of some pieces also hints at an underlying effort at psychological poise not quantifiable in labor time.

The realism alone of Reichman's work would not set it apart. Its content does. Anyone who knows his art will recognize the rainbow palette and jumbled drapery of "Rainbow Play Systems" (2004) and "Holding on to Happiness" (2003) as conflicting symbols of gay solidarity and an instinct for disguise.

Forms related to the vaguely phallic,

loosely stuffed boa of fabric, studded with jester's bells, in "Rainbow Play Systems" turn explicit in the sadly funny "Satin Cock" (2005) and "Codpiece" (2005). These ring almost wistfully for the culture war years when they would have made the family values poobahs see red.

The masks come off in watercolor and gouache self-portraits such as "All Consuming Identity" (2005), in which the artist shows several views of himself apparently learning to suppress his gag reflex using a rainbow-colored antique toy.

We seldom see in contemporary painting Reichman's peculiar mix of confrontation, high craft and emotional ambiguity.