

# Review Drake LaBry creates his own fish stories at Museum as Retail Space

By **DAVID PAGEL**



Drake LaBry's "My Non-Conceptual Object" is part of his exhibition at Museum as Retail Space.

(Drake LaBry / Museum as Retail Space)

Artists often feel like fish out of water. Misfits in a society that puts business first, they flop around on the deck hoping that someone tosses them back before it's too late.

Drake LaBry turns that bit of folk wisdom inside out. At Museum as Retail Space, "Decorative Family Room Paintings" suggests that visitors stop worrying about what it's like to be a fish out of water and start thinking about what it means to be a fin without a fish, or a fish without a fin, literally and figuratively.

One of the first works you see is a trophy marlin that LaBry has covered with a thick coat of white paint over which he has painted an elaborate pattern of copper, silver and multihued pentagons.

One of the last works you see is “My Non-Conceptual Object,” an oddly shaped sculpture that hangs from the ceiling. Covered with partially mixed rivulets of red, yellow, blue, white and green paint, the piece has the presence of a whimsical abstraction.

It takes a few moments to notice that its shape matches that of a marlin’s big fin, which just happens to be missing from the one you saw on the way in.

Between fish and fin, LaBry treats visitors to a dazzling display of 23 paintings and seven sculptures he made over the last five years. Many are covered with thin sheets of scrap metal that have been cut into the shape of fish scales and arranged in scalloped patterns.

Big fistfuls of glitter, gobs of polyurethane and rolls of gold leaf have been liberally applied, alongside camouflage patterns, stenciled palm fronds, swathes of chicken wire and slabs of cardboard.

Rather than making works that play it safe by staying out of harm’s way, LaBry embraces excess. What his art lacks in ambiguity it makes up for by going all in — and then some.

Museum as Retail Space, 649 S. Anderson St., (323) 526-8097, through July 25. Closed Sundays and Mondays. [www.marsgallery.net/now/](http://www.marsgallery.net/now/)