

## Entanglements

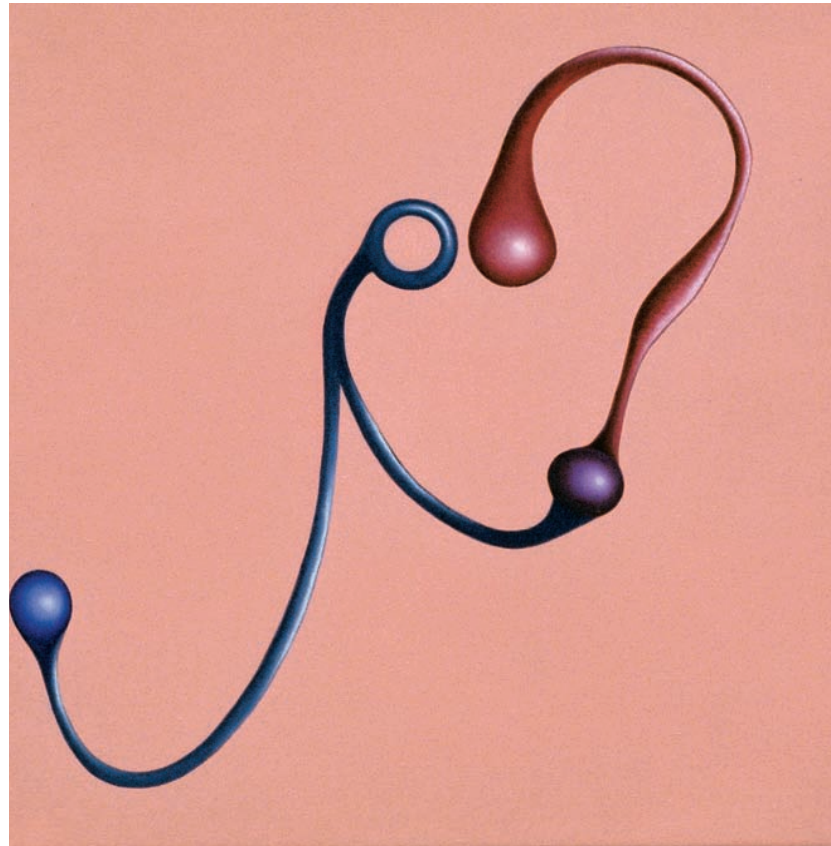
In her enigmatic paintings, Madeline Silber convincingly fuses nature and artifice, transforming inanimate objects into anthropomorphic subjects. Her curvy, attenuated, bulbous forms are familiar-seeming but strange; life forms seen under the microscope, perhaps, or aspergilli from another planet. They are rubbery, perfectly smooth, and fast receptacles, full of a liquid or gas that can be compressed through tendrils and tubes and then expanded into globular bulbs of various dimensions and connotations—pods, galls, heads, bodies. Each jewel-colored element is given convincing physical presence through the careful delineation of light playing over volume. This light seems to come from outside the fabricated scene, from the viewer's space, which psychically helps to connect the two realms.

Silber's subjects are far from inert; they bounce, float, and drift. Lithe and acrobatic, they contend with gravity, although it appears to be a more permissive kind than what is known on earth. The figures almost always operate within the confines of the intimately scaled canvas. One form may touch an edge of the composition but never reaches outside these borders, which seem to comprise its only world, the way a droplet of liquid on the slide of a microscope comprises a trapped microbe's only world. At the same time, the relatively uninflected, warmly colored, painted background against which these biomorphs perform suggests suspension in a limitless dream space.

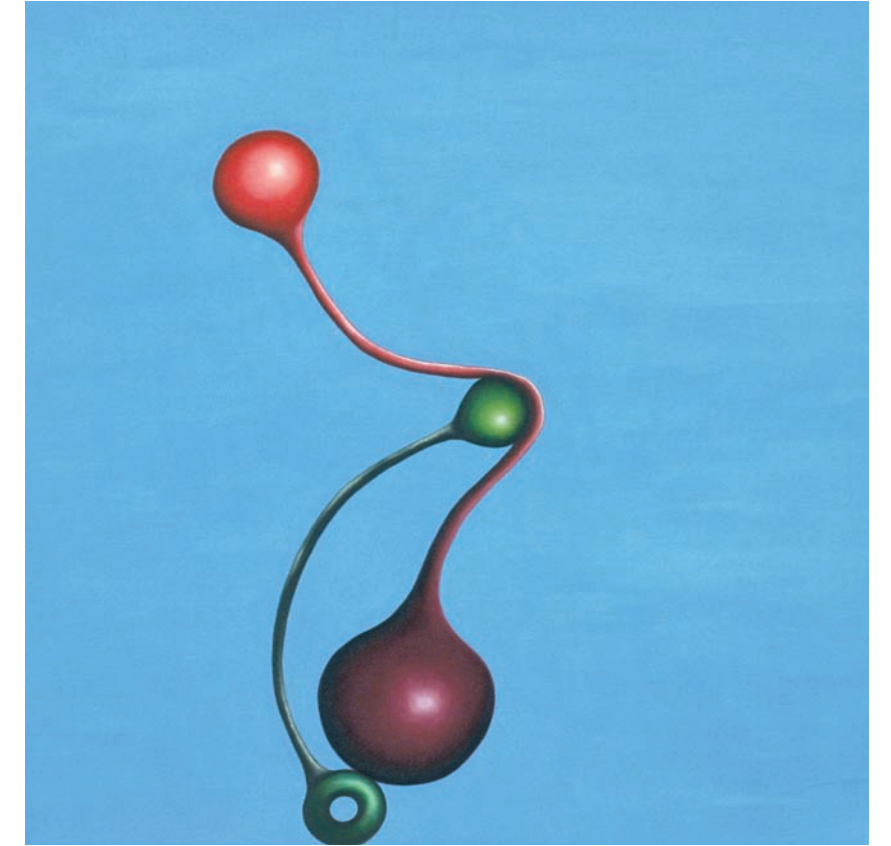
Silber often arranges her forms in complex relationships, which can feel, by turns, erotic, emotive, playful, or familial. The titles she gives her paintings imply, alternately, social activity (*Embrace, Promise, Whisper*), conscious purpose (*Dreamer, Reflective, Restless*), or physical action (*Sway, Rise, Pulse*). She has also ascribed human motives and motifs to her objects, describing them as “standing in for figures” or as “family members struggling for autonomy,” “trying to hold things together,” or “tending [to] human relationships.” Although ultimately ambiguous, her witty surrogates pose assuredly under our scrutiny, eager to charm us into believing they are fellow travelers from a shared world.

Thomas Piché Jr.  
Director, Roland Gibson Gallery

Cover image: *Embrace*, 2006, oil on linen, 16" x 12"



*Promise*, 2007, oil on linen, 8" x 8"



*Effort*, 2006, oil on linen, 12" x 12"