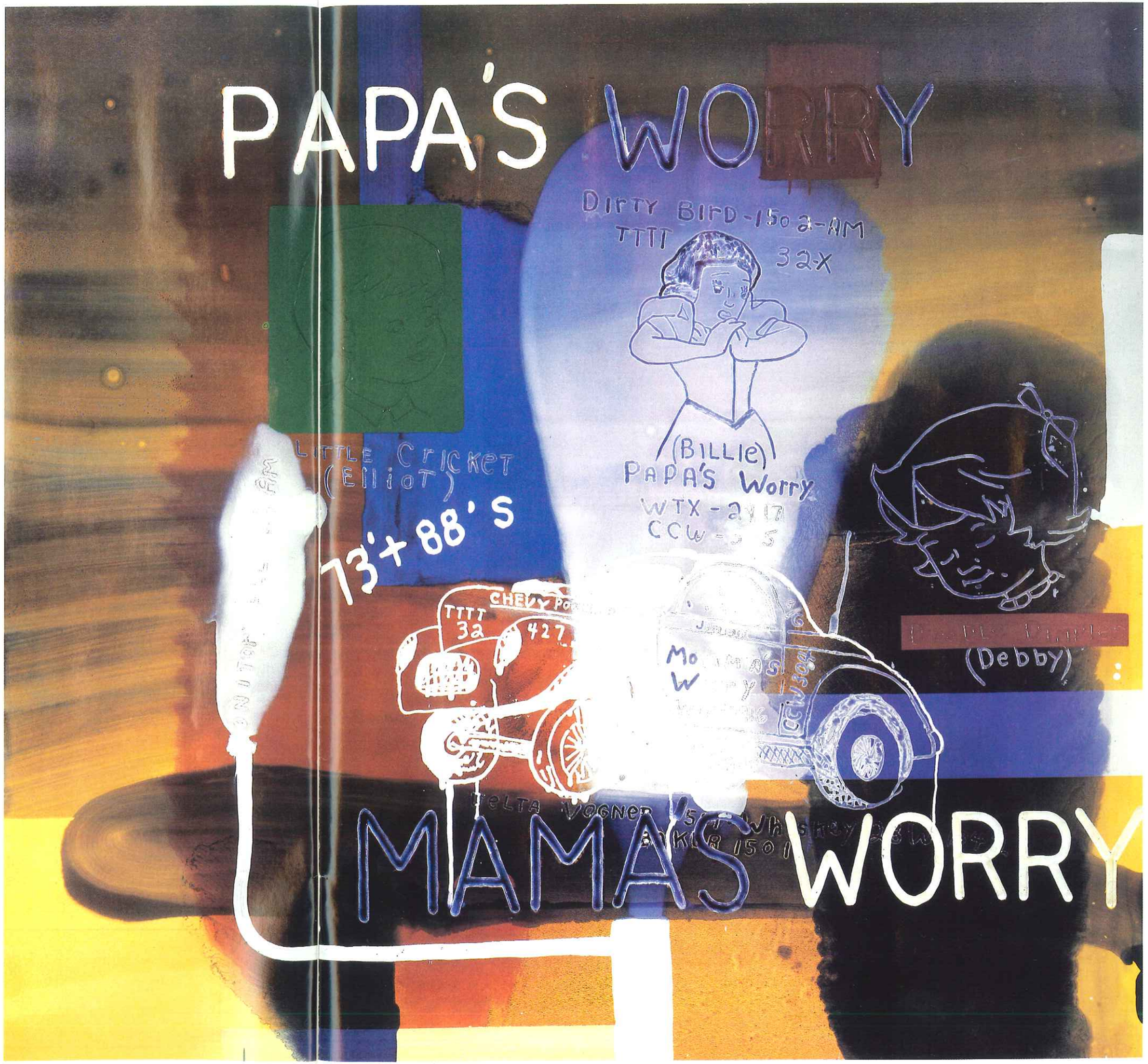
THESE ARE IMPRESSIVE PAINTINGS and they should be seen first-hand because any reproduction, no matter how diligent, will miss the impact of their size, the intensity of their colour and their slick physicality. These things count in Graham Gillmore's paintings. They have meaning.

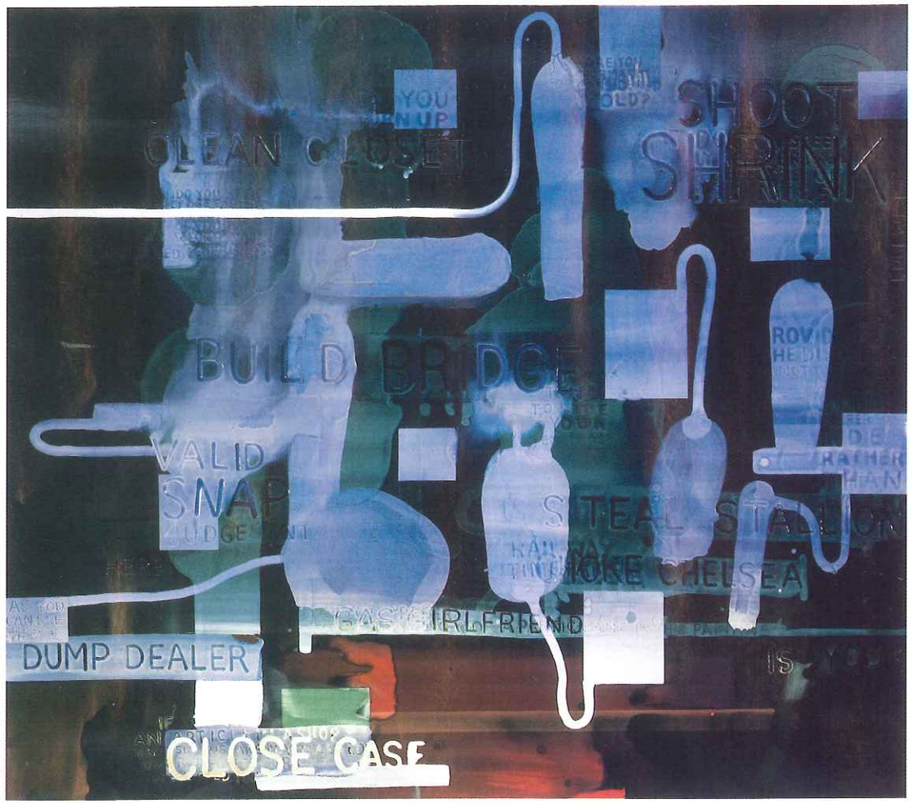
The artist keeps studios in New York and BC and for a decade and more has been making a kind of meta-painting, which is to say painting about painting. In his recent work, the gleaming resin-cast surfaces are reinventions of the oil-based skins of traditional painting. The casting process Gillmore follows makes his paintings sculptural; it lets him build layer by layer, colour by colour. Things cohere in three dimensions, the paintings are like slabs hoisted on the wall and they possess an embedded inner light. Looking at them at the new Monte Clark Gallery in Toronto was like looking into squared-up pools of water: the imagery swam beneath and below, aloof in the isolated space and time of its own creation.

This specialized format, developed by Gillmore and now seen appearing in the work of a number of younger painters, seems like it might have its roots in recent Old Master studies—the ones where conservators lend art historians an analytical hand with lab photos of microscopic side views of Velázquezes and Vermeers showing centuries-old pigments trapped within bits of hardened linseed oil. The photos track process, tracing the order in which pigments were laid down, a trek that often arrives at bare canvas, the point where the art, though it might be thought, remains unmade. Think of it as illustrational deconstruction.

Gillmore picks up this unravelling scrutiny for his paintings, adopting the demeanour of the reproductions. His work glories in their glossy, forensic look. It camps out with modern science, heading ever inward, closer and smaller. In some paintings this parallel direction is suggestively



Graham Gillmore
Papa's Worry, Mama's Worry 2001
Oil and enamel on wood panel
208.3 x 223.5 cm



Graham Gillmore
Untitled (Things to do, 3rd version)
2001 Oil and enamel on wood panel
203.2 x 228.6 cm

Graham Gillmore
Radio Amator (2nd version) 2001
Oil and enamel on wood panel
182.9 x 203.2 cm

literal. We see the glow of X-ray backlighting, schematic digestive tracts where bladder-like organs digest nuggets of words that have been routered and dremmelled into the resin. In other paintings the inward drift is more conceptual. The content carries a cultural and personal memory pulse. We see bits and pieces of modernist grid float by or the bleed of a colour field emerge. These pictorial memories are coupled with wish lists, puns, word games, sums, nicknames, self-help slogans and childhood cartoon figures—none of which, in any combination, seem alien.

This inclusiveness is key. It steadies our sense of Gillmore's paintings as taking shape within a human, biological arena. His liquid, visceral landscapes let time, images and thoughts accrue. They flood, filling a holistic space that seems like a window onto brain chatter. Gillmore paints whatever comes by. Things appear, settle, fade. His flashing primary colours and greyed murky depths become corollaries for major subjective orientations, for now and then, conscious and unconscious, past and present. It is a deep inner vista that Gillmore paints, one with knots and troubles and lunacies and darkening contrasts but no discernable end. Some might recognize painting in the lay of its land, or for that matter, any one of us in the midst of a long, busy day.—RICHARD RHODES

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