

# WESTERN ★ PROJECT

Selected Press on Cole Case (2008)

## LOS ANGELES TIMES

Arts & Culture

Around the galleries

By David Pagel November 21, 2008

**Paintings Deliver a Jolt of Solitude** People never appear in **Cole Case's** paintings of places familiar to folks who live in Los Angeles or just visit.

A human presence, however, is suggested by the everyday objects the L.A. painter depicts: a nearly empty margarita glass, a battery-operated lantern aglow on a park picnic table or a portable television tuned to the news from 1968. The moments Case paints are increasingly rare ones when we city dwellers are left alone with our thoughts, free from other people (not to mention the distractions of instant digital communication) and momentarily adrift in our heads, where desire and regret fuel all sorts of reveries and recollections. Think of each of his seven oils at Western Project as a pause button in your rapid-fire life, a unique chance to step back from the hurly-burly and experience a jolt of solitude. The scenes and settings Case depicts are simple: a sunlit tabletop on the patio at an old-fashioned Mexican restaurant; a shadow-shrouded booth at a local watering hole; the spotlighted stage at the Hollywood Bowl during a nighttime performance; the Hollywood Forever Cemetery under a rain-cleared sky. The way he applies paint is far more complex. Sometimes Case lets his turpentine-thinned colors run freely, dripping down the canvas and bleeding into one another, like supersaturated watercolors on the verge of chaos. At others, he trowels on thick pigment as if its mortar and he's cementing bricks. Some parts of some paintings are sculpted, built into three dimensions so that they have the tactility of the real thing. Other parts appear to have been applied with the fastidiousness of hobbyists who fill in every abstract shape of a paint-by-numbers set as if their lives depended on it. And still others have the hokey charm of outsider art, a sort of ham-fisted Pointillism that marries the unself-conscious earnestness of children's drawings with the savvy verve of avant-garde innovation. All these elements pale in comparison to the way Case makes light spill from his paintings. From the ghostly glow of a black-and-white television to the cool blue illumination of hundreds of cell phones held up at a concert, he makes light come alive. Whether its yellow dazzle shines from megawatt spotlights, seeps from a battery-powered lantern or bathes all of Los Angeles in the crystalline clarity of autumn mornings, light provides the magic that makes Case's paintings dance in your imagination. The landscapes they illuminate are at once intimate and ordinary, part of the world we all live in yet wonderfully out of step with its relentless rhythm and unforgiving tempo.