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An installation view of "Promession," Benjamin Bertocci's exhibit at Von Ammon Co. All the paintings are named "Promession" plus one or more Roman numerals. (Vivian Doering)

In the galleries: Finding beauty inside and outside the garden walls

Three exhibits capture the delicacy, complexity and vibrancy found in the plant world

Mark Jenkins | 30 December 2022

"Promession," the title of Benjamin Bertocci's Von Ammon Co. show, refers to a theoretical method of disintegrating cadavers by freeze-drying. All the paintings are named "Promession" plus one or more Roman numerals, but only a few appear to depict human bodies, whether decayed or merely distorted. What links the pictures is not subject matter but technique.

The New York artist usually paints on what he calls "plastic entombed canvas," and fragments the subject matter into chunky, computer-style pixels. The effect is to deform the image, although some of the simpler ones — such as, of course, a skull — can be easily discerned when viewed from a distance. Less decipherable are a pastel-toned Julie Andrews and a take on Jan Brueghel the Elder's "The Temptation of St. Anthony" that's even darker than the original.

One of the painter's concerns is technology, and the single picture that's partly collaged includes broken bits of circuit boards. But perhaps Bertocci sees digital representation as just a means of fracturing and diminishing. The artist pursues a process that, like promession, reduces complex beings to the simplest of bits.

Promession at von ammon co, Washington, DC runs through 08 January 2023