

## Art Reviews

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**What a Word:** Everyone knows that you can't judge a book by its cover, but many people still look at contemporary art and judge it by the words that surround it.

At Post Gallery, **Brad Spence's** new paintings on paper fly in the face of this contradiction. Insisting that you look for yourself, these air-brushed images demonstrate that abstraction only gets going when words are left out of the picture.

Even Spence's figurative works are abstract. The compositions and palettes of each have been faithfully drawn from the covers of philosophy textbooks and paperbacks—except for the words. No titles, names of authors, translators or editors get in the way of each piece's design.

For example, "Irrational Man" depicts a knockoff of a sculpture by Giacometti, stoically striding toward the edge of a gray field.

"Socrates" shows a bust of the philosopher, framed by a thin black line. "Metaphysics," "Objectivity" and "Theory of Ethics" give respective shape to ideas about materialism's shortcomings, science's building blocks and morality's unwavering ideals—without revealing any conclusions.

What's most remarkable about Spence's paintings is that they refuse to put philosophy above fashion. Forcing significance and style into an unlikely alliance, they undermine a fundamental assumption on which much of Western thought is based.

After all, inviting viewers to trust their responses to what they see is not the same thing as asking us to believe our eyes. The latter implies submission to an outside authority; the former puts each of us into the picture, where active participation is required.

• *Post Gallery, 6130 Wilshire Blvd., (323) 932-1822, through July 3. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*