

EDWARD THORP GALLERY
Press Release

Matthew Blackwell: Whoop Em Up Cindy
December 5, 2008 - January 17, 2009
Reception for the Artist
Friday, December 5th, 6-8 p.m.

Matthew Blackwell's third solo show at the Edward Thorp Gallery, takes its title from an Uncle Dave Macon song from the 1930s. Much like Uncle Dave's freewheeling world of small town characters, medicine show revelers and holy rollers, Blackwell unleashes his cast of performers by means of a vital and raw painterly language. There's a cheerleader at the bottom of her world, a ball player punting a devil's head, a hermit stepping out of the woods at daybreak. There are cameos by Tom Waits, Eyeball Jim, Bob Dylan, Tiny Montgomery and perhaps Wilco's Romeo whose vocal chords are made of gold. Evoking a rural world of Arcadian bliss conflicted by poverty and wayward desire these paintings depict a glimmer of hope, or at least the courage to whistle as we walk through the graveyard. Everyone is looking for something, be it a path or a hollow log to call home.

In these paintings, Blackwell uses powerfully physical paint handling at times offhand and tender and collage elements, sometimes having a clear intent but also allowing the process of free association and painterly possibilities to inform the narrative, drawing on his knowledge of folk music and other Americana as a subconscious well of cultural reference. The artist uses oil on linen and other mixed media. Whether small and diaristic or large and ebullient, in these probing and questioning works everyone seems to be fighting or dancing but also, in some sort of reverie. They will go down swinging in any case, and in good company.