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Art Review: 1960s Revisited (in Santa Fe)

At David Richard Contemporary

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Written by Ellen Berkovitch



Lee Krasner told Barbaralee Diamonstein in 1978, "Yellow is an extremely difficult color." What would Lee Krasner say if she could walk in on the show 1960s Revisited at David Richard Contemporary in Santa Fe? There, spread across three spacious rooms, are major yellow notes: (left) Minoru Kawabata's *Yellow Slow* (1965) at the front, and in the second room, works by Lawrence Calcagno and Hisao Hanafusa announcing that yellow's distinction - its spectral transition in the ROY G continuum between hot orange and cooling green - can be stunning, because it's unusual, and because it's really hard to make a good less great yellow painting.

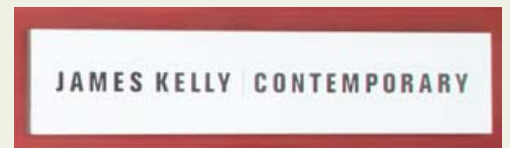
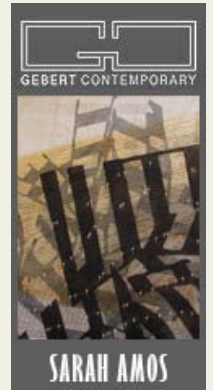
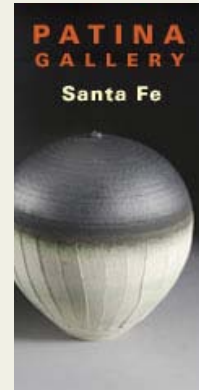
This show of paintings energetically proposes that art history's trend to high reduction of the period between, say, 1959 and 1974, was more like a simmer in which not everything reduced into either Ab Ex or Pop. There's breathing

room here, elbowing into the picture many Japanese artists living in New York, and other formalists including Thomas Downing and Sidney Wolfson, in whom can be seen Op sensibilities transitioning the preoccupations of Frank Stella into the hard-edge of industrial-design 1970s patterns. Do I see a Maserati? The overall surface cover of a Marimmekko toile?

To realize how much gets eliminated from a flash card approach to art history is to hold, while looking at this visually stimulating and intriguing show, a nuanced view - indeed, this show's biggest proposition amid its bright, complex and unabashed canvases. The exhibit was curated by Gary Snyder of New York's Gary Snyder Project Space and relates to one he mounted in New York titled *New American Abstraction 1960-1975* (installation shot from that show, right).



As you enter, a glance at the wall to your right reveals Sumiye Eugenia Okoshi's *Untitled '68* as a centrifuge of color, the controlled spill underpinned by a green



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whorl. The Asia/Pacific/American Institute at NYU mounted a show of her Persistent Light paintings several years ago and published a catalog that revealed this:

On a train from Tokyo to Nagasaki, Okoshi passed through Hiroshima after the bombing. The military police ordered her to shut the blinds but she peeked through. She saw that there was nothing. Faced with nothing herself, Okoshi decided to leave Japan. She fought authorities to recognize her as an American citizen by birth and came back to Seattle, WA where she began working, studying, and making art with Fay Chang and Nicholas Damascus at Seattle University and Henry Frye at the Modern Art Museum of Seattle. Okoshi also found inspiration in the work of Mark Tobey...



Is it reading too much into the relationship of this postwar period and the Japanese-ancestry if not nationality of several of these artists, to offer that Yellow Slow (by Kawabata) is a shape that could have expressed nuclear fission as well as a phenomenon of perception? It made me think of the effect seeing Toyo Ito's Tokyo building, Egg of Wind (left), had upon me a decade ago - containment, energy, boom (so different from what that would look

like in, say, a Roy Lichtenstein.)

At the front of the show, too, are reasons to remember that the precedents to Ab Ex happened in such New York settings as the Hans Hoffman School. (Hoffman being that person to whom Lee Krasner introduced Pollock, and to whom Pollock uttered the infamous, "I Am Nature," line.) The Hoffman influence is apparent in Mario Garcia's 1959 Barn series, the red-sided barn pushed into by thick-striped blues and blacks, as if the earth itself were roiling up landscape into volume. How different that looks from another work that led me to riff on Dubuffet or Juan Tapies, the surface of Masatoyo Kishi's Untitled (1963), with squiggles, drips, a-near existential writhing.

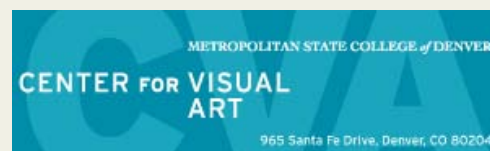
Against this first world (room) of drips and stains and bleed, the second room announces a color-form relationship more common to Op. Spectral things are going on with Albert Stadler -- a torqued set of stripes as if the picture plane blew at a hard tilt and then caused its color to flow down as if rain-washed, at an angle. He had his first one-man show in 1962 at Bennington College, Vermont (from which Helen Frankenthaler got her B.A.).

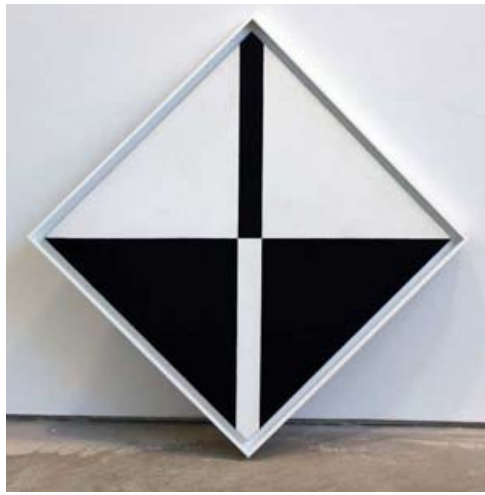
Add to this long view of the '60s into '70s Lawrence Calcagno Sunbands 1969 and Roy Colmer's #43 1973. Calcagno isn't just dividing the picture plane - you'd have to posit some effect of Frank Stella here - but segmenting three distinct shapes of the painting, descending in color from lemon yellow, to tangerine, red, purple, umber, blue to black, black back to yellow. Next to it the bright-yellow canvas with chrome tubing of Hisao Hanafusa Yellow 1 (66), looks so of its moment, and so prescient of a meeting between design, even industrial design, and fine art.

Ward Jackson's Reversal Interchange VII ('64, right) is one of the best paintings here, discrete and jazz-quick in its unfolding form into a diamond that, well, reverses and interchanges. Finally in the last room - and I'm not even touching yet the related work by Beatrice Mandelman, whose estate this gallery now represents - Greenberg-ain formalism turns into what I jokingly jotted in my notebook was a male version of Pattern and Decoration. From Hilton Brown's formica-reminiscent hatching in Homage to the Immaculate (1965) to the arched form of a Thomas Downing, you can stand




Interview with David Adjaye





here and look back where you've been and reflect on the richness of art practice then, as now. And on how unnecessary it seems to try to cook it down.

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