

GENTRY

HOME

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2019



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ON THE COVER:

A crisp, contemporary residence in Silicon Valley by the architectural firm Swatt | Miers. Photography by Russell Abraham.

PHOTO: RUSSELL ABRAHAM



SIMPLICITY OF LINE



Award-winning architects Swatt | Miers
conjure a private Silicon Valley residence that
embodies effortless elegance.





They've done it again. The team from Swatt | Miers has been on a veritable roll for the past 20 years crafting homes and commercial buildings that express a crisp, contemporary point of view that places the utmost value on beauty, sustainability, and user responsiveness. The wonderful private home on these pages is a prime example of what this firm does so well.

Notes Bob Swatt, "Our clients discovered this property in Atherton with marvelous mature trees and brought us in to rethink the site and create a forever home. They are young, with children, and wanted an informal space that would suit their lifestyle and maximize indoor/outdoor flow." To that end, the architects designed an L-shaped structure with the short leg of the L facing west and the long side of the L running east to west. The shape of the structure and its placement on the property allows for spectacular green space that can be accessed from every room on the ground floor. The grounds were beautifully designed by landscape architect Bernard Trainor of Landstudio and include a pool, sport court, and planting beds. "The patio areas have these incredibly long horizontal extensions that are topped with sleek aluminum trellises," says Swatt. "The interplay of shadow and dappled light from them throughout the day is marvelous."

A peaceful water feature leads to the home's front door. Once inside, a dramatic wall of INAX ceramic tile from Japan offers striking texture. "The home's single vertical element," shares Swatt, "is the striking stairwell that features a stack of windows along the far corner and elegant glass railings to maximize light." The top floor includes a series of bedrooms with en-suite Jack-and-Jill baths with garden views, while the lower level features a wine cellar and gym.

An extraordinary highly polished concrete floor that more closely resembles stone was expertly poured to run the length of the main level through the living room, office, kitchen, and dining room. "At first," notes Swatt, "the home owner did not want a formal dining room—keeping everything casual was key to them. But as the design process continued, they realized that in the future, it might be something they would consider, so we

Fresh, contemporary, and casual were the guiding ideas behind the design in this Silicon Valley home. The team at Swatt | Miers kept the lines of the home crisp and simple, allowing wonderful flow between the interiors and spacious garden beyond.





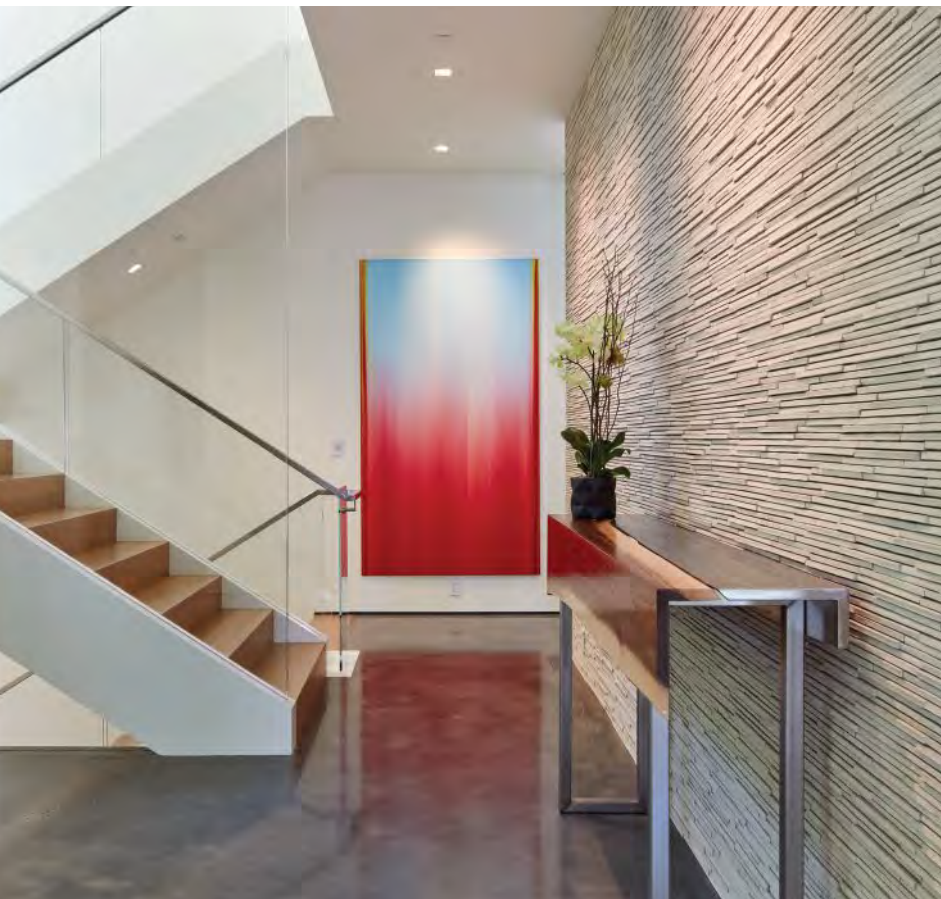
The color scheme in the home is neutral, allowing a few bold punches of art work and rich texture to shine. The master bedroom opposite features a wrap around deck with views of the garden.

created a very flexible space with 15-and-a-half-foot ceilings that is now tasked as a play room/homework/ piano area.”

The kitchen features double islands with waterfall stone countertops that contrast with striking quarter-sawn eucalyptus cabinetry by Arclinea. Top-of-the-line appliances from Gaggenau, Miele, and Sub-Zero ensure that cooking is a dream. Interior designer Connie Wong from the Swatt | Miers team selected contemporary furnishings that emphasize the home’s clean lines; for instance, the sculptural “Big Bang” pendant by Foscarini makes an impressive statement over a large dining table, and the slim-back leather chairs are from B&B Italia.

In the living room, a low-slung sectional sofa by Minotti sourced from Aki-tekura in San Francisco provides plenty of room for entertaining. The INAX ceramic tile from the foyer is repeated on the massive hearth that includes a fireplace by Ortal. “The garden was key to this design,” says Wong, “so we purposefully selected a restrained color palette, allowing the seasonal colors of the garden to play their pivotal role.”

When asked about his favorite aspect of this finished project, architect Robert Swatt reflects, “I think it lives well. I like the simplicity—it’s quiet and elegant, working in harmony with the site.” ♦





June 11th, 2014 RICHARD SPEER | Visual Arts

Dream With Your Eyes Open, Gregg Renfrow

A church without pews.



EMANATIONS BY GREGG RENFROW

You could build a new religion around Gregg Renfrow's artwork. His abstract compositions—polymer and pigment poured onto cast-acrylic panels—are so luminous and elemental, they inspire a reverence normally reserved for deities. Each piece features a central motif roughly the shape of a rectangle, surrounded by shapes that echo its contours. They evoke the monolithic forms of millennia past: the standing stones of Britain, the heads of Easter Island, the totem, the obelisk, the altar, the phallus. These archetypes seize the eye and imagination and command both

to pay obeisance. There's something mystical or psychedelic about the echoing shapes as well; they radiate like tracers, expanding in a way that suggests vibration or movement.

Renfrow is also a virtuoso of color. In *Emanations*, the central form grades through a brilliant continuum of sunflower, butter and lemon yellows before giving way to a twilight of cerulean, cobalt, ultramarine and aquamarine. In the piece that gives the show its title, *Dream With Your Eyes Open*, inky blacks yield to grays and vivid purples. Not all the pieces are so saturated, however. In *Speaking* and *Memory of Water*, the central shapes are the same color as the backgrounds, their forms suggested only by outlines on the panels or, in some cases, a second panel placed behind it. It's as if the forms are in the process of evaporating or leaving their bodies.

This suggestion of dematerialization links Renfrow not only with fellow exponents of the California Light and Space movement, such as James Turrell and Robert Irwin, but also to abstract expressionist Mark Rothko. Rothko's mature style involved floating rectangular shapes that seemed to dissolve in a misty haze, much as Renfrow's forms do. It's notable that the Rothko Chapel in Houston uses paintings as a vehicle to dissolve the boundaries between light, color, form and spirit. Looking at Renfrow's panels, it's impossible not to imagine what they would look like lining a cathedral, like stained glass. But until that commission, we're thrilled to see the artist's work wherever we can find it. These magnificent works, in their way, turn any room into a temple.

SEE IT: *Dream With Your Eyes Open* is at [Elizabeth Leach Gallery](#), 417 NW 9th Ave., 224-0521. Through June 28.

PREVIEW

GUIDE TO GALLERIES + MUSEUMS
ALBERTA ■ BRITISH COLUMBIA ■ OREGON ■ WASHINGTON

June/July/August 2014
www.preview-art.com

VIGNETTES • June/July/August 2014

Oregon

ALLYN CANTOR

MELVILLE WIRE: THE PROCESS OF INVENTION *Michael Parsons Fine Art, Portland Jun 4-29* One of Oregon's foremost early painters, Melville Wire (1877-1966) worked primarily *en plein air* and is known for his beautifully coloured impressionist landscapes of the early 20th century. This exhibit includes several of Wire's oil paintings and more than 20 works on paper. Among the drawings here are working studies with his hand-written comments noting colour, atmosphere and unique scenic attributes, providing insights into Wire's creative process.



Melville Wire

GREGG RENFROW: DREAM WITH YOUR EYES OPEN *Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland Jun 5-28* Gregg Renfrow is known for his luminous paintings that layer polymers and pigment on cast sheets of acrylic to create sublime and subtle works that exemplify the innate physical properties of light and colour. For this new exhibit, he expands from single sheets of acrylic into multi-panel pieces. Renfrow has exhibited nationally and internationally since the 1970s, after receiving his BFA from the San Francisco Art Institute.



Gregg Renfrow

KATIE TORN: THE END OF FLUTTER VALLEY *Upfor Gallery, Portland Jul 3-Aug 2* New York artist Katie Torn builds virtual realities using 3-D rendering tools originally created to produce animation and special effects in mainstream film and commercials. In her fantastical artworks, Torn combines organic and synthetic elements into a universe of colourful plastic-like objects and surreal figurative forms. Through this technological media, Torn reflects on consumer culture in her playful prints and experimental digital videos that underscore the manipulative consumer system of commodification, desire and waste.



Katie Torn

RICHARD C. ELLIOTT: PRIMAL OP *Hallie Ford Museum of Art, Salem May 31-Aug 24* This major retrospective of Washington artist Richard C. Elliott (1945-2008) traces his career from the drawings and performance pieces in the '70s and '80s to his signature work using safety reflectors in the '90s and early 2000s. Elliott gained national attention for his use of reflectors as an artistic medium to create intricate compositions that borrow from Native world cultures and Op Art. During the last year of his life, he created computer-generated prints comprising thousands of geometric forms. This exhibit provides visitors with an unusual opportunity to view Elliott's reflector paintings with flashlights - heightening the sensory experience of his artwork.



Richard C. Elliott

FASHIONING CASCADIA: THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE GARMENT *Museum of Contemporary Craft, Portland May 9-Oct 11* Exploring the culture of regional fashion, this exhibit looks at the experience of both designer and wearer. Eight Northwest fashion designers and collectives are highlighted, with spectacular finished garments and ephemera that illustrate behind-the-scenes processes. The crafted process is brought forth in this exhibit as a responsible industry alternative, showing how things can be made with care, sustainable sourcing and production.




Lisa Rietz

gallery grazing

First Thursday Sampler

Posted by: Aaron Scott on Aug 02, 2012 at 12:00PM

1 Comments  Tweet +1 Email Like

8



Sculpture + Painting

Julia Mangold's *Drawings and Sculpture* + Gregg Renfrow's *Closer To The Water* at [Elizabeth Leach Gallery](#)

Munich born artist **Julia Mangold's** minimalist sculptures involve rectangular structures coated in a mixture of wax and graphite and then fastidiously assembled into works that range from small boxes to large wall hangings to obsidian like towers. Each paradoxically seems to both shimmer and swallow light as you move through the room, the graphite coating giving the rigid geometric shapes a sensuous velvety softness. If they made a sound, it would be a soft, vibrating purr.



Where Mangold plays with the light found in darkness, Northern California based artist **Gregg Renfrow's** paintings are marvelously luminous. Made through his signature process of pouring polymer and pigment on large sheets of cast acrylic, he creates organic layers of overlapping colors that undulate like the ocean's surface (a departure from his previous work that involved straighter color fields in striations), their color intensity rising and lowering like waves. Set off the wall by several inches, light reflects off the wall and through them, making them practically glow from within.

San Francisco Chronicle

Renfrow's work enhanced by spiritual quality

Kenneth Baker

Saturday, May 16, 2009



Dark Green-Blue-Green, 2009,
polymer, pigment on cast acrylic,
51 x 28 inches

Modernism's abandonment of grand public themes in art for reports of subjective and private life culminated, on one trajectory, with Color Field painting in the 1960s.

Does anyone else see color the same way we do ourselves? We will never know more precisely than color names can indicate.

Critics set a gravestone upon Color Field aesthetics decades ago, for the style's social irrelevance. But that has not kept Benicia artist Gregg Renfrow from advancing his own path to painting that seems to dematerialize into tints and intensities the moment we surrender to it. Toomey Tourell is showing a selection of his recent work.

Renfrow had to reinvent the pictorial support to achieve the look he wanted, and years ago, he began pouring color over cast sheets of translucent acrylic. On a white wall, light reflected from behind his pictures' shines through them, enhancing their fine gradations of hue and density.

So much for the parameters; everything else about his work attests to Renfrow's experience of watching and judging how his materials behave as he varies their interplay endlessly.

Renfrow's paintings are abstract as you please, yet they quaver with suggestions or reminiscences of imagery.

"*Dark Green-Blue-Green*" (2009) retains a hint of parted curtains and of radiance from below, as if sheeting up from stage footlights. A less successful trio of smoky gray pieces may remind viewers of a certain age of defective black-and-white TV.

But such associations do not linger where we find Renfrow in his stride. There his paintings attain a kind of levitation and liberation from scale evocative at best of spiritual striving or release.

Gregg Renfrow: Atmosphere: Paintings. Through May 30. Toomey Tourell Fine Art, 49 Geary St., San Francisco. (415) 989-6444, www.toomey-tourell.com.

E-mail Kenneth Baker at kennethbaker@sfchronicle.com.

This article appeared on page E - 3 of the San Francisco Chronicle

THE Magazine
Ruth Pastine and Gregg Renfrow
Peter Blake Gallery
326 N. Coast Highway, Laguna Beach
(949) 376-9994
www.peterblakegallery.com



Gregg Renfrow, *White with True Red, Crimson*, 2008, Acrylic on acrylic

Ruth Pastine and Gregg Renfrow have very different ways of defining the indefinable. At first glance Pastine's paintings seem nothing more than beautifully executed color fields. Subdued lighting forces the engagement of the viewer, however, and after further inspection the subtle color shifts become apparent. *Blazen* is the most obvious example of the relationship Pastine sets up between cool and warm tones in this body of work. But the most impressive canvas here is *Phase 2*, a predominately black/blue painting that in its cool tone manages more provocatively to address the same warm/cool relationship. Pastine's paintings are skillful in their seamlessness and the color structures are unique in each piece, but every painting poses the same question: where does color end? The ultimate quality of these monochromatic paintings is their ability to define the area of absolute gray.

Gregg Renfrow defines his absolute colorless moment in his work with light -- not lighting, but the actual portrayal of light in pigment. The work has been painted on acrylic panels and was exhibited in bright natural as well as artificial light, allowing ambient light to penetrate the painting from all angles. Renfrow has applied his multiple-layered glazes in striations, creating colorless portions in each panel that make each seem as though it has suspended the brightest moment of a single flash of light. *White with True Red, Crimson* convincingly impersonates the indefinable color of a lens flare; the drips of paint and material on the perimeter of the panel, however, remind us that this is in fact a painting.

by Andi Campognone



Hap Tivey and Gregg Renfrow at Elizabeth Leach

Can SoCal Light and Space cure the Portland winter blues?

BY RICHARD SPEER



If you're prone to SAD (and who among us doesn't get a little seasonally affected during a soggy Portland January?), then run, don't walk, to Elizabeth Leach's dream-team double bill of light sculptor Hap Tivey and painter Gregg Renfrow. Both artists were part of the Southern California Light and Space movement of the 1960s and '70s, a movement born of the area's mythic confluence of sea and sun (and perhaps smog): Think sunsets filtered through Malibu haze, vast blue horizons striated with orange and red. Both artists are indebted to the formalist tracts of minimalism and color-field painting—as well as, obliquely, to Impressionism—but in different ways. Tivey uses canvas, acrylic, and LED lights in works that have neonlike appeal, but with a cooler visual temperature. In the aurora borealislike *Wavelength of Speech* the artist suggests not only the amplitudes of sound waves, but also air and ocean currents, separating and flowing as their viscosities dictate. *Sand Grain*, with its circular form and breastlike shadow, grades downward from blue to green, while *Galaxy Particles* features a striking blue crescent moon, counterbalanced by a shadow bank on the work's opposite side.

At Gregg Renfrow's First Thursday opening, he explained the inspiration behind his polymer-and-pigment-on-cast-acrylic pieces: a kind of rapture he experienced while standing in front of Raphael's *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* at the National Gallery in London. He says he was suffused with "pure pleasure in my body," which he wanted to re-create in the chromatic ambience of his paintings. (Renfrow should get a MacArthur Grant for saying something so unabashedly, unfashionably hedonistic.) The artist succeeds in his goal, his matter-of-fact titles (*Crimson and Carmine with White Center*; *Green-Yellow-Green*; *Maroon over Yellow*) encapsulating the works' simultaneous vacuity and pregnancy. The visual equivalents of the music of Brian Eno, Renfrow's and Tivey's styles posit color as mood as meaning; meteorologic atmosphere as expressionist atmospherics. It is eye candy, wallpaper; it is groovy and shallow and trancy and blissfully nonconceptual, and if it doesn't cure your SAD, you need a soul transplant.

SEE IT: Elizabeth Leach, 417 NW 9th Ave., 224-0521. Tivey closes March 1; Renfrow closes Feb. 2.

GALLERIES

Kenneth Baker

San Francisco Chronicle

DATEBOOK

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2006

Artists bring color and light back into focus

Since the early 20th century, many artists have tried to treat color as an end in itself. Some have done it by withdrawing the pretext of subject matter, others by trying to negate the viewer's consciousness of pigment's physical substance.

After 1950, Mark Rothko, Helen Frankenthaler, Barnett Newman, Morris Louis and other painters sought ways to handle color that would soften our attention to the surface and structure behind it.

Dan Flavin, James Turrell and others working with light have tried by various means to release color from all physical support, except perhaps architecture, to let it present itself as pure phenomenon.

So Bay Area painter Gregg Renfrow places himself in a long line of descent by making work like that on view at Toomey-Tourell.

Renfrow applies pigment dissolved in polymer medium to translucent sheets of cast acrylic. These hang unframed, slightly forward of the wall, so that light passes through them in both directions, dematerializing to a degree both the support and the color applied to it.

The acrylic sheet reasserts itself at the top and bottom edges of a piece such as "Violet-Red, Dark Green Over Indian Yellow" (2006), where droplets of colored runoff have hardened into little nubs, like nascent icicles.

Renfrow's titles affirm that color and light concern him to the exclusion of everything else. But even his most insistently abstract paintings attract associations.

A viewer who knows Louis' "Veils" may think of them first when confronting "Violet-Red, Dark Green Over Indian Yellow." But thoughts of a stained, faded curtain, perhaps of oilcloth, or of the blur of something slipping past at great speed might also come to mind.



Gregg Renfrow, *Violet-Red, Dark Green over Indian Yellow*, 40 x 40" polymer and pigment on cast acrylic, 2006.

Such associations detract not at all from Renfrow's work. Instead, they suggest that he understands he can take only so much control over the effects he sets in play. The ideal of abstract painting completely impervious to context and inadvertent visual rhyming died long ago, possibly with Ad Reinhardt (1913-1967).

Renfrow apparently wants us to experience a flavor of light available only in his paintings: a luminosity cleansed of the reminders of time that tinge our ordinary consciousness of any light source.

Occasionally he may even reach this goal. Viewers must decide for themselves and can never be sure of their own contribution to the experience.

Gregg Renfrow: Fascination: Paintings. Through Tuesday, Toomey-Tourell, 49 Geary Street, San Francisco. (415) 989-6444, www.toomey-tourell.com. E-mail Kenneth Baker at kennethbaker@sfchronicle.com



Gregg Renfrow, Green-Yellow with Violet-Red, 40" X 51, Polymer, Pigment on cast acrylic, 2004

JAMES TURRELL, GREGG RENFROW

The sculptures James Turrell fashioned out of nothing but vividly hued light were the next step after the finish-fetishists' near-immaterial objects. Turrell's art is entirely immaterial, disappearing when its lights go off or the room lights go on. The works reconstructed here, two 1968 Cross-Corner Projections and a 1969 Shallow Space Construction, move the visual experience of a Robert Irwin disc to the next level of disembodiment. Irwin called this retinal conjuration "perceptualism", and that's the question Turrell's early work keeps posing: how you see it, how you don't. **Perceptualism persists, not least in its California birthplace, and Bay Area painter Gregg Renfrow gives it a new wrinkle by nudging it halfway back to painting. His paintings look at first like acrylic on canvas, but there's a visual buzz indicating your eyes are kidding you. Turns out the acrylic is the support, and the polymer provides the color, suspended inside the transparent panels. By not subjecting the pour of the polymer to finish-fetishization, Renfrow preserves a painterly quality — a re-embodiment of sorts.**

James Turrell at Griffen Contemporary, 2902 Nebraska Ave., Santa Monica; Tues.-Sat., 10 a.m.- 6 p.m. (310) 586-6886. Gregg Renfrow at Sabina Lee, 5365 Wilshire Blvd.; Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-6 p.m. (323) 935-9279. Both thru Feb. 12.

Peter Frank

GREGG RENFROW
Elizabeth Leach Gallery
February 5-28

With the advent of photography, painting's bond to representation loosened. Painting became an autonomous art form rooted in the qualities inherent to its materials, flat unprimed canvas impregnated with pigment and paint. Nowadays, painters working in this tradition often find themselves caught in a complex dance with the "ideal," codified by critic Clement Greenberg; the "spiritual," a lingering side effect of abstract art; and the relentlessly "material," the slick and colorful extrapainterly surfaces that are ironic counterparts to contemporary abstract painting and which dominate visual and consumer culture.

Bay-area artist Gregg Renfrow paints by pouring a mixture of pigment and polymer over transparent, cast-acrylic panels. On display at Elizabeth Leach Gallery, the panels hover about an inch from the wall, allowing bright, even, gallery lighting to strike the front of the panel and simultaneously reflect off the wall through the back of the piece, electrifying the ultrathin washes of color. With the exception of the sinuous streams and diffused color of *Cerulean-Pthalo Blue with Orange and Magenta*, Renfrow's new work emulates, perhaps unintentionally, the supersaturated color of a high-definition display as much as the photon glow of midcentury television.

It is difficult to look at Renfrow's paintings without tracing the arc of abstraction. A practice which began as a remove from representation, abstraction now emulates the medium it set out to eschew; Renfrow's work morphs into the representation of blank, colorful video screens. Perhaps this jaunt into "low culture" is a move in the right direction. As a badge of high culture, abstract painting too often relies on defenses either overly simplistic, presumptively spiritualist or mind-numbingly oblique to be of any use to those who believe art is made not only to be seen, but also to be talked about. Abstraction's "fall from grace"—into the realm of superattractive, technological consumer products—communicates a revelatory vision of what we place our faith in and where we seek solace. Perhaps Gregg Renfrow's works are an ambivalent homage to painting's ever querulous engagement with the world as it is, not as it might be.—*Stephen Cleary*

Visual Arts

BY RICHARD SPEER

243-2122 ext. 313, rspeer@wwweek.com

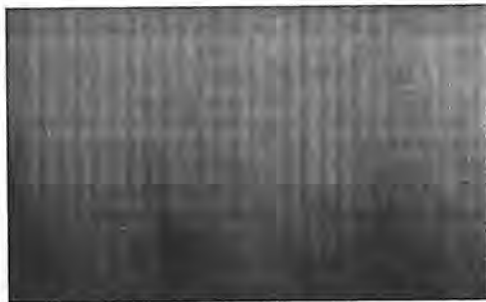
FEBRUARY STANDOUTS Bolt, don't saunter, over to **Elizabeth Leach** (207 SW Pine St.) for Gregg Renfrow's color-field paintings, an early contender for best show of 2004. Renfrow's polymer and pigment works on cast acrylic are sublimity made material: super-saturated blocks of color that reveal, on close inspection, delicate striations, chromatic shifts, and beaded, dripped-dry edges, like Popsicles that have been licked for a while, then put back in the freezer.

Impeccably lit and with just the right amount of breathing room between them, each of the works plays an etude on a single, singular color. While it's safe to say these colors are bold, it's hard to know exactly what to call them: Mango and swimming-pool aqua are two weak approximations, and the show's most stunning piece inhabits some seldom-seen realm where cobalt meets deep purple. Some of the colors burn your eyes; others chill your heart. All pulse with dynamism and a delicious *mélange* of elegance and sexiness.

www.elizabethleach.com

Gregg Renfrow: Colour Field Paintings

ELIZABETH LEACH GALLERY, PORTLAND, OR Feb 5-28 – Since his graduation from the San Francisco Art Institute in the early 1970s, California artist Gregg Renfrow has committed himself to working with properties of light and space as his artistic medium. Artistic thought during the 1960s, when Renfrow's beliefs were formed, was concerned with de-objectifying traditional



Gregg Renfrow, *Yellow-Green with Red-Violet* (2002), polymer and pigment on cast acrylic [Elizabeth Leach Gallery, Portland, OR, Feb 5-28]

notions of painting in favour of a "higher truth". This zen-like attitude literally radiates from his serene, almost weightless compositions.

In the current exhibit, Renfrow continues his exploration of light, colour and matter with an uncompromised conviction. The sophisticated colour field paintings demonstrate his mastery over his chosen medium of polymers and pigment on cast acrylic. He creates his illusionistic pieces by pouring thin, uninterrupted washes of colour onto acrylic supports and allowing them to set without any obvious manipulation. Each completed panel is mounted slightly

away from the wall so that the filtering light illuminates the floating swatches of colour.

At first impression, Renfrow's purist objectives may seem overly simplistic and void of meaning. But the artist allows himself to be a catalyst for what is a naturally occurring phenomenon: colour as a reflection or physical interruption of light, manifested in form. Renfrow's intent becomes clear and humbling as viewers become intimately aware of sublime realities told through the powerful aesthetics of radiant colour. *Allyn Cantor*

GALLERIES

Kenneth Baker

San Francisco Chronicle

DATEBOOK

SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 2001

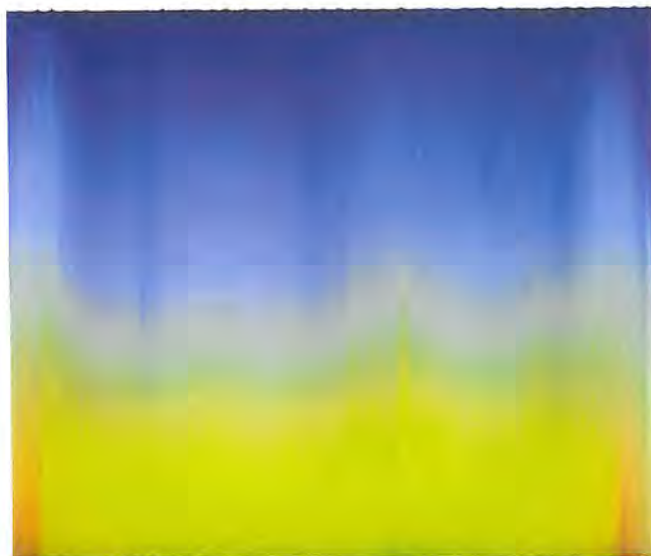
Abstractionists at Allen

Benicia painter Gregg Renfrow strikes a fine and difficult balance between describing and summoning light in paintings made of pigment-bathed, cast acrylic at Robert Allen. These works find a resolution he has sought for years.

Renfrow backs his brightly tinted plastic panels with flanges, so they hang slightly forward of the wall, letting some of the gallery's radiant daylight flow behind them.

But the key to his new abstraction's ringing success appears to be a thinner, less manipulated application of color that allows the materials to do as much work as possible.

Renfrow has been working like someone who privately rediscovered the essence of color, but could not find the language to share it until now.



Ultra-Blue over Yellow-Green by Gregg Renfrow, 2001.

GALLERY SHOWS

GREGG RENFROW, CAROL LEFKOWITZ, RICHARD SABA:
Abstract paintings. Through Sept. 4, Robert Allen Fine Art,
427 Bryant St., San Francisco, (415) 777-0920

Gregg Renfrow, Carol Lefkowitz and Richard Saba

Investigation of the Abstract: New Work by Carol Lefkowitz, Gregg Renfrow and Richard Saba is on view August 2 through September 4 at Robert Allen Fine Art, 427 Bryant St., San Francisco.

Robert Allen Fine Art has made abstract painting the focus of its exhibition for the month of August. It's a good choice, seeing as these painters draw inspiration from nature, utilizing a sunny color palette that brings to mind a pleasant, late summer mood.

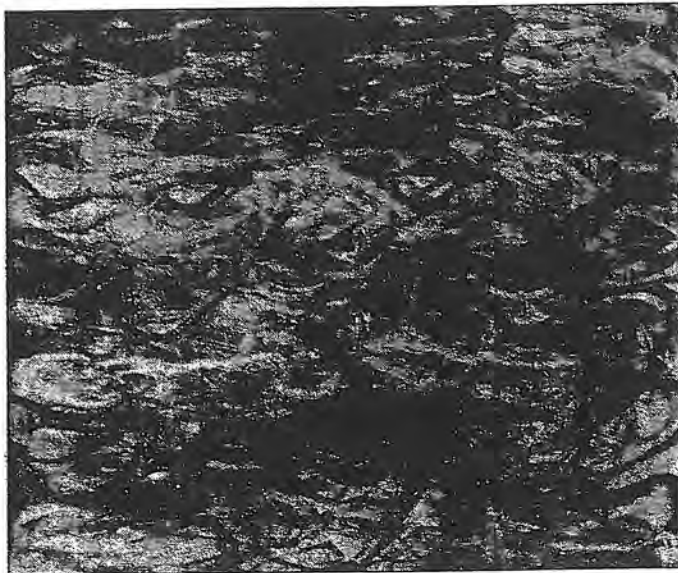
Carol Lefkowitz's oil paintings on paper and canvas evidence an interplay of pattern, light and immersion. The images recall Monet's reflection studies, where the light passing through the shadows of the trees appears to seep through the translucent water, energizing the flickering patterns that striate across its surface.

Gregg Renfrow also explores transparency and opacity in his paintings on acrylic. The artist applies acrylic on acrylic, covering the surfaces of his panes with sweeping washes of diffused color. The paintings are hung at a distance from the wall, allowing light to emanate through their backsides, setting the images aglow.

Richard Saba overlaps vibrant colors with translucent glazes in his large-scale canvases. He will often build up the surfaces of his paintings with various modeling pastes and gels before incorporating color into his compositions. The paint thus acquires a dense plasticity and a heavy materiality in certain areas of the canvas while exuding a wispy, ephemeral quality in others.

These abstract paintings invite viewers to immerse themselves within their serene compositions, in the same manner that diving into a cool lake might seem so inviting on a hot August day.

Carol Lefkowitz, #38, 1998, oil paper, 35" x 39";

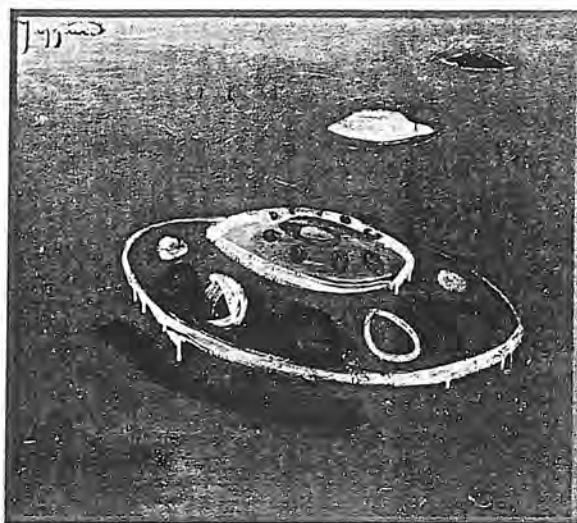


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Reviews



Jason Leggiere, *Flying Saucer*, acrylic on canvas, at MeSH Gallery, Sebastopol.

But as more art (avant-alternative-cutting edge) gets exposed and plays with and against the sensibilities of the larger community, one wonders if the work will transcend place and erase the stigma that you can't see good contemporary art far from the madding crowd. Here's hoping.

—Sandy Thompson

aliensandelvis closed in January at MeSH Gallery, Sebastopol.

Sandy Thompson is a freelance writer based in Northern California.

Gregg Renfrow at Robert Allen Fine Art

In 1972 when Gregg Renfrow graduated from the San Francisco Art Institute, Robert Irwin had already isolated light and space as essential elements for the creation of his own work. Renfrow's current exhibition of paintings continues to explore the properties of light and space as artistic media. Irwin was keenly aware and so was James Turrell that light illuminates as well as destroys the integrity of objects in space. These two artists, and other Southern California artists working in the 1960s, sought to dematerialize the traditional art object for the sake of higher artistic truths. Renfrow has inherited this legacy as well as the conceptualist ideology of Robert Morris and Donald Judd who created works that explored the edges of visual perception.

Renfrow's recent paintings add another proposition to the history of American abstract art. They express with certainty, the phenomenon of light as it interacts with matter to create color. This is a per-

ceptual truth that Renfrow wants the viewer to physically as well as mentally understand. The images in these paintings, consisting of three to six vertical bands of color, ranging from grays to fully saturated colors, have a conviction of purpose

that seem to represent some kind of cognitive experience. By this I do not mean that the bands mimic mental pictures or dream imagery. Instead, they look like representations of some actual neurological event hidden from our sight but occurring somewhere within our perceptual system.

Since 1982, Renfrow has been working on acrylic panels that allow light to filter through the pigment. The result is an illumination of color and form subtly projected from the surface of the work. While looking at the paintings, the bands of color may appear suspended in real time and space. He achieves this dislocation or dematerialization of the painted image by pouring polymer over acrylic panels. He is very careful not to interrupt the runs of paint with the unpredictable effects of the human hand. The impression from the contact of carefully poured polymer and transparent support is that the process has occurred all by itself through some unknown power or force.

Renfrow's working method allows him to achieve the full juicy impact of the bands of color in paintings like *Orange* or *Yellow-Orange-Yellow*, or the perfect chromatic workings of *Yellow-Green with Red-Violet*. Even though the excess of poured paint forms into droplets on the bottom edges of the painting, he makes efforts to negate the physical act of pouring. He inverts some of his paintings so the droplets of polymer are on the top edges of the work. But his

more significant act of negation of the materiality of pigment on surface is his decision to work on transparent supports. The transparent and fluid materials he uses and his method of application can be interpreted as a metaphor for the activity of the mind as an endless succession of thoughts gathering next to each other, edge-to-edge, like bands of color.

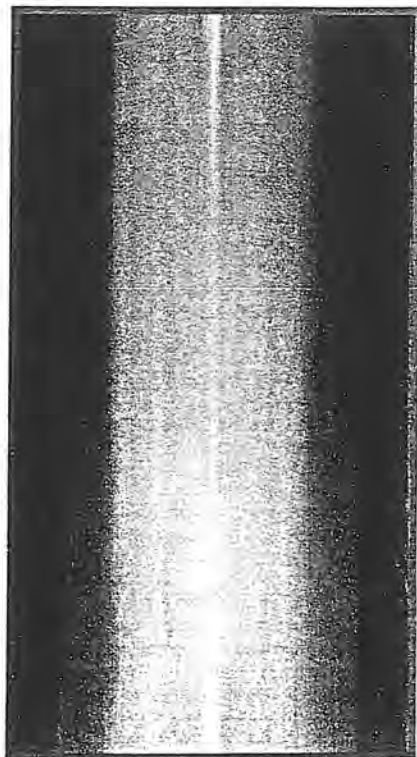
Renfrow has sought greater abstraction in these recent paintings and by doing so, has opened up a wider gap between form and content with no possible link between the two. When looking at his work, a question comes to mind—where is their clear and distinct meaning? His paintings project images of sensuous color schemes that are resolutely abstract. But the problem is that the meaning in this work is lost, disembodied and defused in its own reality. If there is a possible meaning in this work it is probably sealed in Renfrow's unremitting desire to search for a pure abstract art.

—Juan Rodriguez

New paintings by Gregg Renfrow closed February 11 at Robert Allen Fine Art, San Francisco.

Juan Rodriguez is a contributing editor to *Artweek*.

Gregg Renfrow, *Yellow-Green with Red-Violet*, 1999, polymer on acrylic, 66" x 37-1/2", at Robert Allen Fine Art, San Francisco.



Damp northern light in Rosen works

Painter living in Newfoundland

Former Bay Area painter James Rosen relocated to Newfoundland recently, and his work at Anglim reflects the change.

With sparse watercolor and gouache on cardboard, these pictures note the geometry of clustered frame houses under tacking northern light.

The gray-brown cardboard Rosen paints on may evoke the damp, shadowy North Atlantic air for those who know it. But viewers familiar with Rosen will think sooner of his apparent artistic source: the landscape drawings and watercolors of Giorgio Morandi.

GALLERIES

Kenneth Baker

Beneath echoes of Morandi may lurk a dim reference to Picasso's proto-cubist Horta de Ebrulandscapes.

In years past, Rosen repainted classics of European art, covered his copies with milky tints that their sources barely recognize and suggested inevitable failure of memory and homage.

Observation and remembrance have equal force in these pictures making them Rosen's most mature and pleasing work yet.

The longing to see that's implicit in Rosen's new work may

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

JAMES ROSEN; TREPASSEY, TRIANGLES & PARALLELOGRAMS; ORIANE STENDER; AL WONG: Watercolors, collages, light boxes. Through Aug. 25, Gallery Paule Anglim, 14 Geary St., San Francisco. (415) 433-2710.

GREGG RENFROW, CAROL LEFKOWITZ, RICHARD SABA: Abstract paintings. Through Sept. 4, Robert Allen Fine Art, 427 Bryant St., San Francisco. (415) 777-0920.

JAAP BONGERS, DANA CHODZKO, ELIZABETH SALTOS, JOE SNYDER: Paintings, sculpture, photographs. Andrea Schwartz Gallery, 333 Bryant St., San Francisco. (415) 495-2090.

the play of real and drawn shadow in Al Wong's electrified constructions seem brittle and academic.

But the best of Oriane Stender's stitched and woven pieces using real currency detail an interesting penetration of art, design and commerce that we usually prefer to ignore.

Abstractionists at Allen

Benicia painter Gregg Renfrow strikes a fine and difficult balance between describing and summoning light in paintings made of pigment-bathed, cast acrylic at Robert

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someone who privately rediscovered the essence of color but could not find the language to share it until now.

Carol Lefkowitz presents canvases briskly brushed into that works of color. They look abstract as you please one moment, and the next, collapse into descriptions of water ruffled by wind and light. Perfectly respectable work, it leaves a viewer feeling that Lefkowitz wishes she dared to dispense with its figurative underpinning.

Richard Saba confronts the difficulty of sincerity in abstract painting now, making each of his pictures an anthology of techniques and light-imitating effects.

Many viewers will think of Gerhard Richter here. But though Saba may share some of Richter's sly sophistication and his fatalism as regards expressive paint effects stiffening into conventions, Saba's handling of color is anything but

ert Allen. These works find a resolution he has sought for years.

Renfrow backs his brightly tinted plastic panels with flanges, so they hang slightly forward of the wall, letting some of the gallery's radiant daylight flow behind them.

But the key to his new abstractionists' ringing success appears to be a thinner, less manipulated application of color that allows the materials to do as much work as possible.

Renfrow has been working like

► **GALLERIES: Page B8 Col. 1**

resigned.

Every collision of hues in his paintings is considered and sharply felt, yet not ruled by programmatic thinking.

Odds and Ends at Schwartz

In 35 small encaustic panels at Andrea Schwartz, Dana Chodzko revives something of early Russian constructivism's utopian impulse by inventing an abstract sign language for prepositions.

Several related objects employ her semiotic so bafflingly as to make a viewer suspect her of satirical motives.

Joe Snyder breaks promising new aesthetic ground in mixed-media works on scraps of scavenged linoleum. The rich range of material effects he puts in play do not quite add up to convincing artworks, but technically he really has hold of something.

E-mail Kenneth Baker at kennethbaker@sfnchronicle.com.

A STATEMENT ABOUT GREGG RENFROW'S WORK

From the more minimal, serial work of a year or so ago, a new, looser, more figure-allusive body of work has been accumulating in Gregg Renfrow's studio. The technique remains collage - montage, really: Color is applied to thin acetate film, then transferred to more rigid acrylic sheets: the results are luminous monochromatic color-fields, the surfaces remembering the wrinkles, bubbles, thick and thin areas of the films, but steady and patient on their new stable grounds. But the stability is only provisional: the color-fields sliced, fragmented, edge-shaped, superimposed so as to trap and filter light passing through, casting shadows on the wall, subtly bouncing color into the space around them.

This is painting from the eye, real abstract expressionism. The pure colors are premeditated, and the shapes determined: by intuition, by repetition, even, occasionally, with stencils. But the mixed colors and shapes develop "accidentally" as they build up on the studio floor, each work continuing a theme, following a preoccupation, to achieve a new expression.

No painting is definitive; each is provisional. Each sees and tells a limited truth about a finite area within finite experience, desire, trepidation, or delight. Renfrow intends poetic abstractions, as his titles indicate - *Last Kiss in the Garden*; *Burning Bridges*. And the abstractness doesn't avoid intellection: words and images are to be taken as verbal and conceptual symbols, as well as for themselves. But the symbols are visual, and their primary effect is sensuous and immediate.

Fire and water. The animate elements, poised between air and earth. Two courageous pieces in particular reveal this surfer-artist examining the spiritual meaning of his physical immersions: 3-10-48, whose title is his birth date, and *Mother*. Like all of his work, they do not recoil from beauty. Their physical energy is contained by the balanced logic of their color-fields and by their crisp edges. force meets, invites, and plays with counter-force, within each work, and among the several works. As each fragment builds with the others to make a painting, each painting takes its provisional place in the constant but constantly changing context of the body of work.

Each cell of our body is awash in a fluid recalling the sea.

Charles Shere
October 1, 1991