

## Aesthetic Abstraction

*Tibor De Nagy Gallery*

Along with several other recent exhibitions that have attempted to focus on a particular facet of the abstract painting revival, this show includes some less familiar voices that should be heard from more often. Though this show has modest ambitions, it takes a tentative step toward widening the dialogue surrounding abstraction. A show focusing on the abstract sublime seems somewhat retrograde (if not to introduce a counterweight to reassessments of decoration or Formalism), but for the fact that there is always room for paintings, as described in the press release, in which "beauty completely overwhelms reality."

As such most of the work does eschew formula, giving the impression of having gone through several stages of evolution. Maurice Golubov, the elder statesman here, is represented by two paintings from early in his career, some twenty years apart, that are typical examples of his constructivist roots and his preoccupation with architectonic structures. Nonetheless, there is an eerie light emanating from these small paintings that sets the transcendental tone of the exhibition. Similarly, Bill Pangburn's luminous canvases generate heat and light from vertical passages of febrile color swaths that float like streamers against a dark field. Tom Nozkowski and Bruce Porter are both involved with locating eccentric shapes in subtly modulated fields. Porter's "figures" are more elusive. Nozkowski pushes his shapes around until they stay put or fall off the edge, but both use dissonant color to force the issue.



Andrea Belag, *Pleasure Principle*, 1991, oil on canvas, 72x66 in. ("Aesthetic Abstraction").

Terry McHugh employs veils of pale washes or dot grids to mask or partially obliterate egg-like forms or geometric modules. Both Andrea Belag and Ann Shostrom use monoprint afterimages to create a mottled expanse from which allusive shapes emerge. Shostrom layers multicolored shards of warm and cool color that suggests dense foliage. Belag assembles a monochrome, gestural wash backdrop for a pair of delicate "cattail" shadows. Belag's evocative gesture perhaps best represents this exhibition's understated and sublime aspirations.

**Robert G. Edelman**