

# Art in America

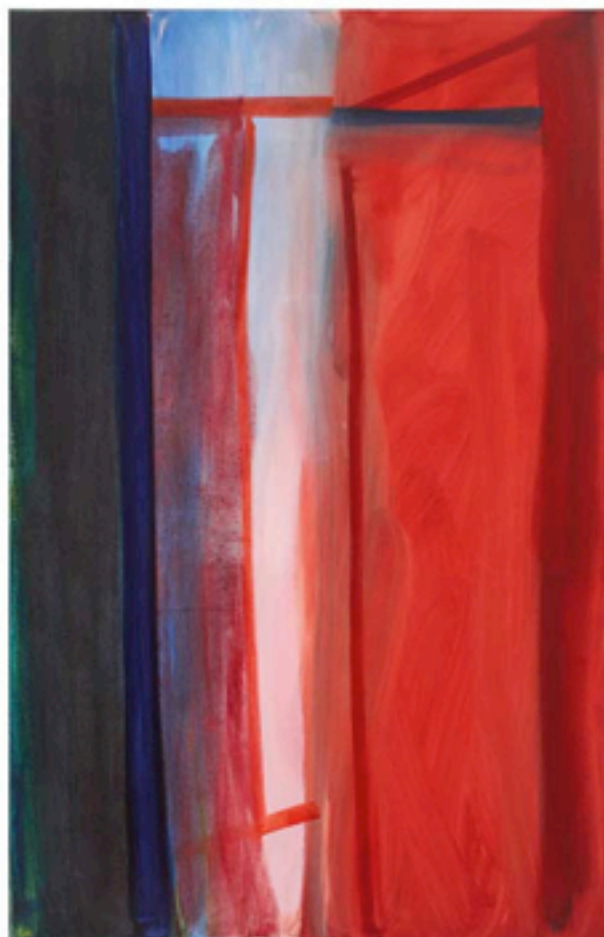
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## Andrea Belag at Mike Weiss

Modest and arch, Andrea Belag's most recent paintings, most from 2007, locate delicately wrought, spare scaffoldings of line in zones of intensely saturated or darkly overcast color. Her abstract syntax involves an expressive collision of chromatic fields and line, while her idiosyncratic palette offers both the purity and buoyancy of hedonistic hues - see the aquamarine of *Open Letter* - and disquietingly murky and discordant tonalities (the reds and green-blues of *Kyoto Summer*, for example).

Because Belag's paintings evoke vistas through doors and windows and suggest emotional intimacy through sensitive brushwork and the subtle intersection of fields, her work has encouraged comparison to that of Howard Hodgkin. Works such as *Out of the Blue* (2006) also bring to mind the quirky diffidence of Raoul de Keyser. A spidery composition of figure-and-ground distinctions made this painting the odd man out in the show, even though it shares a palette of violet and orange with *Purple Noon*. Direct and gregarious, these two slightly earlier paintings (both 2006) favor clarity of image over evidence of their making.

In the newer works - some vertical and others horizontal - visual sensation is carefully calibrated by a restraint of means. Iconic presence is traded for a slowly unfolding visual and psychological narrative, albeit abstract. *Shadow of a Doubt* shares a format with most of the paintings on view; vertical color bands hug the canvas boundaries to create a central space, a site of tension where much of the visual action unfolds.



Andrea Belag: *Drawing Room*, 2007, oil on canvas, 70 by 45 inches; at Mike Weiss.

Pigment, in this case cinnamon red and forest green, creates an atmospheric support for spare structural elements, which resemble post-and-lintel architecture rendered in weightless and tentative brushstrokes. These, in turn seem to encourage conversations among the painting's parts. Bulging, looping, expansive gestures at the center of the canvas trespass on the more stable and pristine vertical fields at the outside edges. True to its title, *Drawing Room* dissolves a provisional architecture into fluid color, revealing what looks like the portrayal of an interior space.

- Susan Rosenberg