

more affecting than erotic. Individuality is subsumed in favor of the shared human experience of living in bodies that are vulnerable, carnal and mortal. The eeriness of the streets in the Times Square photo is compounded by the pathos of the writhing, prone figures. Slouched on asphalt against a hard or giddy backdrop of buildings and billboards, they recall the victims of a methodical catastrophe on the order of ethnic cleansing or the Jonestown mass suicide.

The exhibition's title, "Naked States," is also a punning series title for Tunick's on-the-road project. In each of the 50 states he has found people willing to pose nude outdoors, though not always in groups. As a consequence, some of the photos are, by default, individual portraits: a scarred, obese young man seen outside an Iowa gas station; two young women standing in high grass in South Carolina; a woman hanging on the arm of a sculpted gorilla on the Las Vegas strip. They are not as compelling as the group images.

The Times Square image, titled *New York*, contrasts a geometric cityscape with extremely irregular poses, a situation reversed in *Nevada*, a photo made in the desert. There, in an undulating landscape, Tunick organized his volunteer models in an orderly zigzag line three bodies wide and more than 200 bodies long that, in the photo, stretches almost to the horizon. His largest crowd to date, some 1,200 people recruited at a Phish concert, provided another opportunity to contrast forms. The group is depicted in two very different images made moments apart, and both titled *Maine*. In one, they lie feet-to-

head in rows across a tarmac. In the other, they turn on their sides or begin to rise, creating a swirling mass of bodies recalling Bosch by way of Sebastião Salgado.

The exhibition included a video installation, Tunick's first, culled from footage shot as his group photographs were staged. The layered collage of slow-motion scenes is coupled with a soundtrack of distorted ambient sounds. Tunick works quickly, asking his models to disrobe, rush to their positions and pose. It's all over in a few minutes, and appears to be liberating and cathartic for the participants.

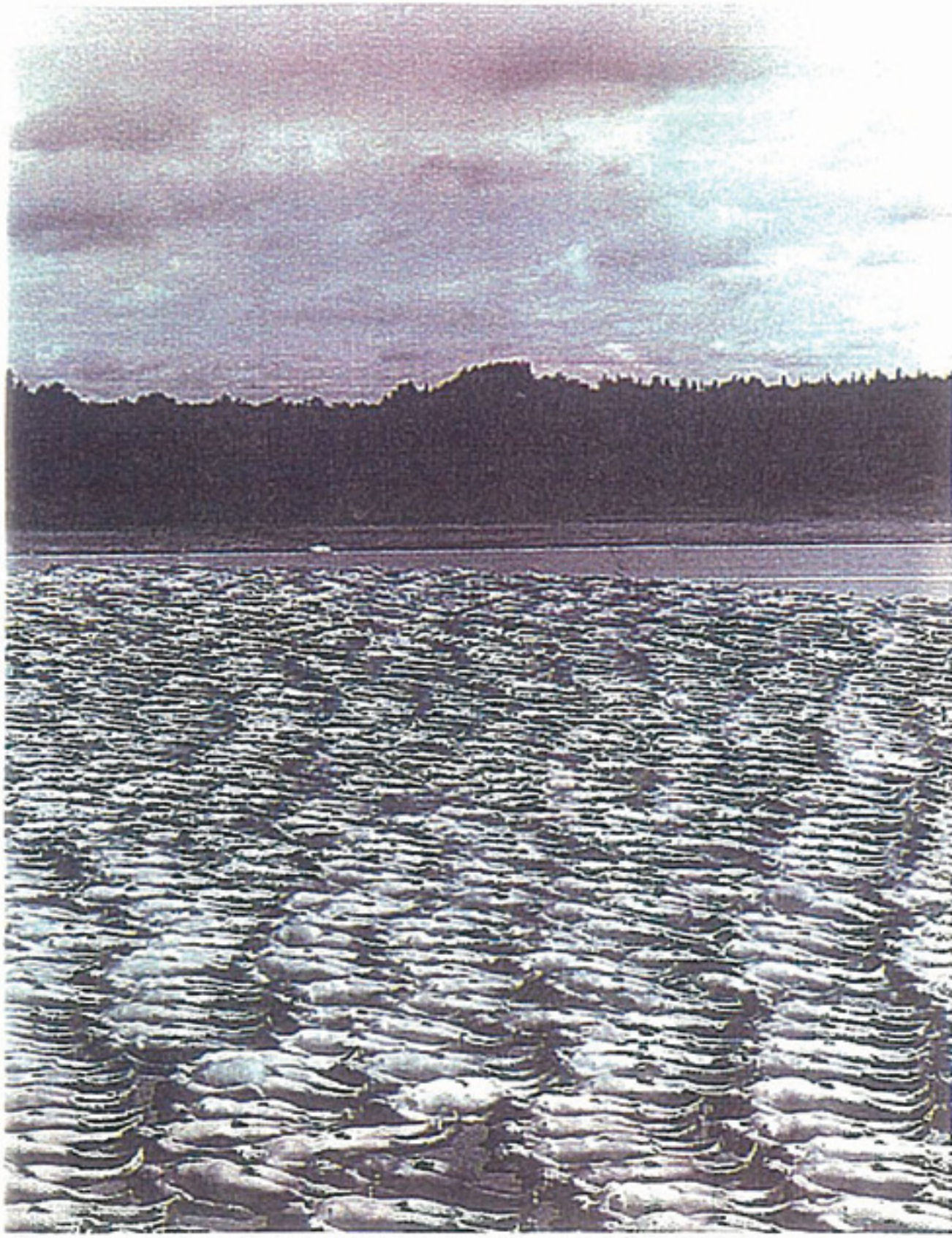
—Grady T. Turner

**Andrea Belag
at Bill Maynes**

Andrea Belag's new paintings are her most abstract in years, but the lived-in world is openly evoked by their fluidly applied bands of color that deepen in contrast as layers of paint are laid across the surfaces. In many of her paintings this process builds her imagery into chunky grids that echo post-and-lintel architecture (notably present in the Maynes gallery space itself). The light is crepuscular; the viewer can easily imagine looking out at sundown from a loft window. The spatial crowding effected by the wideness of her bands and her regulated masses of light and dark produces the feeling of urban sequences of pressure and release.

Because the light in Belag's paintings seems to come largely from behind or underneath her semi-transparent bands of color, there is also a sense of the light of the cinema. Even the semi-gloss smoothness of the dried

paint suggests colored gels and film emulsions. *Noir* (1997-98) is perhaps the painting that most emphatically conjoins the associations of landscape seen through a window and the light and materiality of film. The dark, blue-gray verticals on either side of the picture billow like drapery at the bottom of the canvas, framing the hori-



Spencer Tunick: *Maine*, 1997, gelatin silver print mounted on aluminum, 59 1/4 by 49 1/4 inches; at I-20.

zontal bands that suggest a sunset over water. If the painting's title keys a recognition of the filmic quality of the light and the cropped space of the picture, other titles refer to the presence of water: *River*, *Harbor* and *Rain* (all 1998). We are reminded that New York, where Belag resides, is both a seaport and a river town. In either direction, east or west, the view through the city's architectural canyons lands us in light on a river. With these paintings, Belag could be inaugurating a body of geometric abstraction as firmly tied to place as Diebenkorn's "Ocean Park" series.

The comparison to Diebenkorn is not idle. Belag is one of a handful of younger midcareer artists who are making abstract paintings that draw from both the life-world and the entire history of painting (it was Bellini, after all, who made the great series of portraits with landscape peeking out from behind the figure framed by dark, massively proportioned window ledges). That Belag has moved between abstraction and a poetic, almost folkloric representation while maintaining and developing a characteristic sense of color and gestural scale suggests that she is after something more than a "reading" of painting and place. For

Belag, in this breakout show, the interaction between painting and place is nurturing a tone-rich temperament.

—Stephen Westfall

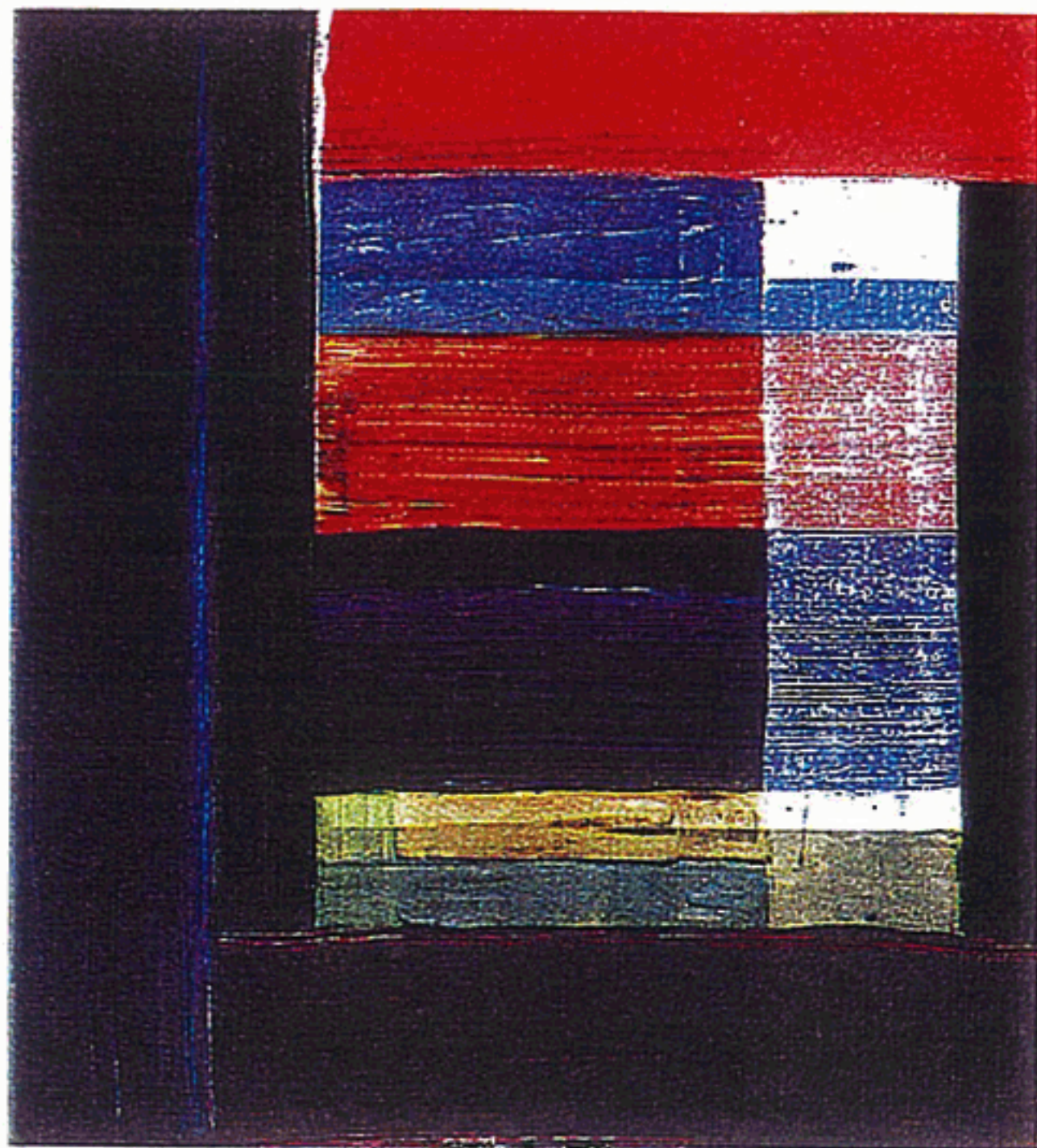
**Paul Laffoley
at Kent**

Paul Laffoley's canvases chart travels through time and space, not to mention certain visitations from alien beings. His works map out psychological territories as darkly idiosyncratic and densely elaborated as those of outsider artists like Henry Darger and A.G. Rizzoli. Yet in an era of pop, *X-Files*-style paranoia—and of contemporary artists such as Matthew Barney and Toland Grinnell who create elaborate personal universes—Laffoley seems no outsider but genuinely in tune with the times.

This exhibition offered a small number of paintings and drawings from the last decade (Laffoley takes up to 10 years to complete his works). The paintings are compartmentalized, offering complex, brightly colored diagrammatic tables filled with hermetic images and writing. *Thanaton III* (1989), for example, depicts Laffoley standing within a glowing orb of energy (the motif is based on a photograph of the artist's supposed visitation by extraterrestrials). There is also a

Chantal Akerman: *Untitled (d'est #5)*, 1998, Cibachrome film still mounted on aluminum, 20 by 24 inches; at Sean Kelly.





Andrea Belag: *Rain*, 1998, oil on canvas, 72 by 66 inches; at Bill Maynes. (Review on p.91.)

single eye, at whose sides are indicated places for the "left hand of the past" and the "right hand of the future." The viewer, by positioning his or her hands on those points while staring into the eye, is supposed to learn how to bypass the division between life and death. Other works are similarly designed to act as portals to other realities when finally deciphered.

The most accessible of Laffoley's paintings here was *It Came from Beneath Space* (1993), which features a giant octopus reaching up its tentacles to the Golden Gate Bridge. Spread throughout the painting are an array of circles containing unusual iconography: a blue mouse of "fears and worries," a bat of "defensiveness." The entire canvas diagrams what the artist calls a "lucid dream," in which the act of dreaming takes place consciously and supposedly transports the dreamer to a different dimension.

Laffoley's work can seem an endearingly overblown, hallucinogenic dead end—inspired but ultimately ridiculous. Yet his paintings call attention to the fine line that sometimes separates outsider art and this century's avant-garde. *Thanaton III* recalls some of Max Ernst's occultish work, and Laffoley's time-travel diagrams are only a step away from the Russian Constructivists' sculptures based on physics equations. If Laffoley is on the outside, he's

looking in the same direction as many insiders. —Tim Griffin

Kenneth Noland at André Emmerich

It is tempting to see Kenneth Noland's new circle paintings, the final exhibition at Emmerich's groundbreaking gallery, as summarizing issues from the great era of American abstraction, when Color Field painting became first a transcendental, then a formalist language. Certainly these works echo the format of Noland's classic circle paintings from 1957-63: a core circle at the center of the square canvas, then several concentric color bands alternating with bands of raw canvas, and a final outer band with jagged, brushed edges—signs of the painter's hand which had vanished but now reappear in these new works.

There are other significant changes: the paintings are smaller (2 rather than 6 feet square), and the edges and corners are painted a single flat color rather than left bare. Some repeat the strong oppositions of primary colors from earlier works, but in many of them the color has become almost metallic, like the shiny blue of *Float*. Others seem Minimalist in the use of color, particularly *Cool Yellow* and *Touch*, the latter painted entirely in shades of white. The use of pastels and

the subtle variations of value and hue in *Sojourn* demonstrate that Noland has abandoned Greenberg's dictum of pure color; exaggerated brush strokes in an orange ring in *Tryst* move beyond the dogma of straight stain painting and recall Noland's work of the early and mid-1950s. The smaller scale and the fleshy pink in several works refer to the body in a different, more intimate way than did the male-body scale of the earlier circles. In *The Pink* looks even more like a human eye than *Lasting Eye*, but it is an eye as a physical object, with no consciousness revealed behind.

Most notable is the emphasis on texture and materiality. In many concentric rings the paint is thick enough to show a built-up edge, and the 3-D effect is enhanced by the positive/negative contrasts of juxtaposed colors. Some of the rings look rippled, like the green outer ring of *Red Shadow*. The flattened, thick paint in several broad bands seems almost machined and emphasizes the acrylic resin's opacity. In *Six*, a ring of transparent resin reveals a glimpse of canvas beneath, a guarded reference to that sense of openness and innovation which was conveyed by the raw canvas of earlier paintings.

Because of their clarity and simplicity, Noland's new works convey the initial impression that

there is a wholly rational impulse behind them, what Noland once called "the physics of feeling." But what these works demonstrate, rather, is the life-long experience of an artist working today on the smaller scale of intimate human perception, even as he returns to some of his own beginnings.

—Daniel Rubey

Jason Martin at Robert Miller

At the entrance to this show, visitors were met with a sign reading, "The oil paintings in this gallery are slowly drying. Please don't touch them." The warning was apt, because the thick ripples of paint across these canvases were as tempting to the touch as lush swirls of chocolate frosting.

The key to these monochrome works is Martin's use of aluminum brushes, cardboard or corrugated paper to rake the paint from side to side in a series of wavering parallel ridges. These vary in thickness and, in many cases, in value. They pick up light and create a greater sense of dimensionality. Also significant is the choice of support. The thick skin of paint or resin is applied to "canvases" of aluminum, Plexiglas or polished stainless steel; each of the underlying materials affects the movement of the paint differently

Paul Laffoley: *Thanaton III*, 1989, oil, acrylic, ink and letters on canvas, 73 1/2 inches square; at Kent.

