

REALM OF THE MONOCHROMATIC

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The title of this exhibition, organized by Michael Walls, aptly denotes the show's exploratory, rather than definitive, nature. Instead of creating a strict meaning for 'monochromatic and then gathering art to match, Walls began with the intuitive sense that a number of painters were producing work in a "breadth of different painterly sensibilities in one aura of color"; he described his focus as "works which present to the viewer one predominate color mood, aura, or statement, even though the surface of the individual painting may be composed of two hues, or of a far greater number." The "breadth" of sensibilities turned out to be very wide, the flexibility of Walls' approach bringing us works that are definitively purely monochromatic (i.e., a single hue) to those that provide a visual impression of one color but comprise several on the painting's visible surface. This variety indicates that one can consider 'monochromatic' in terms of the making of the painting and/ or the seeing of the painting. In this exhibition, David Budd is the artist who fits the strictest criteria for a "pure" (in the making) monochromatic painting.

His painting is one color, a heavily tinted lavender, mixed before the act of painting on the canvas, applied in a lozenge texture with thick edges, one over another, in varying sizes and densities. At the other end of this (by no means linear) spectrum are works by a few artists in which the monochromatic aspect is an overall atmosphere or perception; in their creation and on the picture plane, however, other hues are used. One of the most extreme of these is Porfirio DiDonna's blue-black painting, in which the field has been built up with white lead for a relief pattern of horizontal striations with rectangular windows or depressions. The flatly painted surface is 'decorated' with orderly dots of yellow and orange.

Another in this class is Milton Resnick's characteristically built-up painting that appears to be a single, shiny green-gray. In the topography of pure paint swirls, and smoothnesses, peaks-however, one can find significant dabs of orange, white, red. Other paintings that fall loosely in this category include Jerry Zeniuk's work with its thick, complex, waxy-oil surface of oil paint. Here, a complex reddish-gold color has been built out of many layers; the visible underpainting adds richness and texture, the layers working together to form the final, rich hue. Ruth Ann Fredenthal refers to her work as one of her "red-yellow-blue" paintings, but what is immediately seen is a solid, unrelieved reddish-brown-gray field; after several minutes of scrutiny, if one can see beyond the after-images, the undulating movements that separate the three sections become apparent, and after that the color castes of the sections themselves. Fredenthal's painting, one of the most difficult to "see" is one of the most meticulous as well as one of the subtlest color investigations.

Alan Kleiman's seemingly dark mauve field is a noncentralized field in continuous activity. His is a textured surface of small, linear movements that displays lavender, magenta, and other colors complexly worked. Unbelievably, this painting provides Kleiman's first commercial gallery exposure. In several artists' works, we are more conscious of their status as objects. Marilyn Lenkowsky's first corner piece (1975) is shown here, an interesting pyramid that curves into its corner and is a painterly, solid blue. This work contains the most resonance between color and object, making the pyramid and its blueness seem inseparable. This effect is not as prominent in Tony Delap's oddly shaped painting on canvas-colored wood. Bare wood shows in an arc at the top, with a visible separation between it and the canvas-covered section. This irregular lemon shape is painted in a flat, slightly varying blue-gray. George Peck's curving surface is constructed of wooden ribs and plywood, canvas glued to the plywood, and oil paint "stretched" over the surface with various instruments. Peck's emerald green is transparent-the shimmering effect is like that of looking down through water. Two horizontal lines, interruptions, are like breakwaters in the pitted sea.