

Charles Andresen

Dona Nelson

Andrew Radcliffe

Jean Wolff

William Wood

Joe Zucker

curated by Richmond Burton

Apex Art

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New York, New York 10013
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cover:
Charles Andresen
Draught Pistols, 1995
Acrylic on canvas
72.125" x 60"

Special thanks to Chris Byrne, Austin Ackles, Mary Schwab and Steven Rand

Method and Multiplicity

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Method and Multiplicity

It has always seemed to me that the ideal way to make a painting is to do so with the least amount of effort: to find a methodology which allows the painterly process, once set into motion, to proceed as a natural force. Painting offers in its elemental simplicity, the opportunity to create imagery which is the record of its making. The physical or chemical process, played out on the plane of the canvas, could involve pouring, scraping, taping, throwing, transferring, dripping-- just to name a few. The question then becomes "does it work"? Do all the considerations converge to create a painting that has the transcendent quality that artists pursue?

Here we have six artists who have in common a preoccupation with image and a highly individualized process which converge to produce some exciting results and in my opinion, move the medium of painting forward. Four of them, Charles Andresen, Andrew Radcliffe, Jean Wolff and William Wood have not yet had a solo exhibition in New York where they live and work. Dona Nelson's and Joe Zucker's work continues to renew the many possibilities for imagery and process in painting.

The more I have worked with these artists on this show, the more I have felt that their work clearly speaks for itself, so I decided to allow it to do just that.

In making Draught Pistols, Charles Andresen begins with a pool of gel floating in a basin. The artist then takes squeeze bottles filled with paint and squirts the paint into the gel, creating the color and the design of the image. Once he is satisfied with the result, the paint is scooped from the basin and thrown as a unit against the canvas. As Andresen layers the "throws" he is guided by an awareness of the emerging imagery. A portion of Marcel Duchamp's Large Glass is referenced in a swelling orange horizontal form, centered in the top third of the picture-a visual spoof of Duchamp's chance-derived Draft Pistons. The mutated waves, aggressive rainbows, and nutty ovoids create an impression of a constantly forming, disassembling and disintegrating conflagration of color and texture ready to blow the sides off of the painting.

Cats I've Known is a memorial to Dona Nelson's cat of



Andrew Radcliffe Untitled 1996 oil on canvas 78" x 88"

nearly 20 years, Miss Kitty. She appears as a dappled shadow in a dripping veil of green paint which has spilled on that day's newspaper. Miss Kitty's cat escorts flank her vertically. One is standing in profile above the paint drenched newspaper and a pair of cats sit below who face each other but stare out blankly at the viewer with muslin button eyes. "Got a job?" a headline in the paper asks. "Do you know why?" another heading seems to inquire.

There is something meta-narrative about Nelson's work which obliterates traditional ideas of sequence and progression. Cats I've Known refers directly to paintings made over ten years ago-Daily News, 1983, and Wavelength, 1986. Both paintings portray domestic settings in which an open newspaper lies on a round table in the center of the painting. The round table, however had disappeared in Cats I've Known, to be replaced by the floating discs and fields of color more typical of Nelson's recent work.

A stretching nude dominates Andrew Radcliffe's Untitled. Both figure and field are painted simultaneously creating a push and pull spatial tension modulated with marbled, intermingling colors. While the composition of the figure roils and bulges revealing from right to left a stretched and distorted head, mouth, torso, hips, diagrammed uterus, and leg, the field pushes in, expressing through the elaborate patterns of red and lavender an optical psycho-sexual energy.

In his systematically organized studio, Radcliffe paints with a step-by-step personalized process. He mixed oil paint in a blender and lays it onto the horizontal plane of stretched canvas with turkey basters. In some instances, he uses a vacuum cleaner to suck up a portion of the image and fills the newly emptied area with matching colors, but any changes made must be completed within a two to three hour drying time. Process allows a clear expression to emerge and dominate.

In Jean Wolff's recent work, the paint is applied wet-on-wet so that as the moisture builds and gravity weighs down the canvas slightly, colors begin to disperse and pool. Within the loosely gridded field of concentric layered dots, geological plates begin to emerge and adjust. Most noticeably, a line



Dona Nelson Cats I've Known 1995 acrylic, enamel, muslin, on canvas 79" x 41"



Joe Zucker Four Mile Lake 1996 acrylic on canvas 48" x 144"

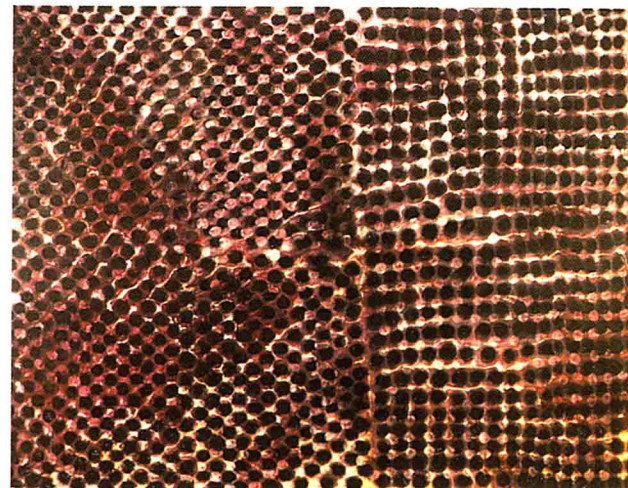
several inches to the right of the central vertical axis forms an impression of an impending paint quake. Wolf received inspiration from traveling through the American Southwest, becoming fascinated with Hoodoos, majestic and naturally formed desert towers in Zion National Park. In Hoodoo a bleeding red-gold color creates a subterranean field of subset groupings of dots, influencing a compositional rigor which keeps the overall painting taut as an animal skin.

Several years ago, William Wood wanted to get away from using the brush; he felt that he had "painted himself into a corner". Influenced by photography and film, he was drawn to the severe representations of nature in the photographs of Karl Blossfeldt. Wood uses a simple homemade object as a surrogate for the the artist's hand, creating layered swerving and swooping rotary shapes which lead into hair pin turns. Much of his process involves the meticulous preparation of the surface of the painting. Painting then becomes an adrenaline fueled event of skill, speed, and dexterity. The semigloss surfaces engage a vertiginous world of layered interpenetrating hyperbolas of translucent paint. The strange luminosity glows from an unknown source in which time and motion are suspended for the length of our gaze. Wood's new black and white essentialism evokes a wide range of allusions, from Guimard's Art Nouveau ironwork to microscopic views of human tissue.

Joe Zucker's Four Mile Lake is a triple-square horizontal

painting of glistening blue-black acrylic. It is dominated by a diagonal undulating wave which slowly arcs upward thrusting at steeper angles. As it aims for the top right corner it droops downward, initiating a series of radiating bridge-like-motifs which progress downward. Zucker made this painting in this continuing new series by pouring acrylic gel from a flattened coffee can used as a pitcher. A deposit of color is placed on the spout so that it mingles with the clear gloss gel as it leaves the pitcher, forming a feathery line which floats within the greater line of gel. The result is an atmospheric composition made completely of closely spaced

Jean Wolff Hoodoo 1996 acrylic on canvas 60" x 84"



(approximately one quarter inch) of concentric lines with fingerprint-like furrows between each line. The gel is highly reflective, so the lines constantly refract and pool light around the painting.

Four Mile Lake refers to one of the lakes that the artist visits annually in Cook county, Minnesota. Rose Lake of 1969 is an earlier painting which refers to these same lakes. As in viewing much of Zucker's work, we feel that we have been taken into a liquid world in which one incident effortlessly slips into the next. In fact, the Minnesota lake provides a visual and sensual analogy to the liquidity of paint and all of its rich (and often slippery) associations.

Throughout his work, Zucker has continually set up a specific methodology which allows his imagery to be revealed with cotton balls, sashcord, pegboard, or poured gloss medium. As each series reaches a conclusion, a new methodology begins. There is always the next process waiting to be explored.....

Richmond Burton ©1996

William Wood Untitled 1996 oil on canvas 24" x 18"

