

Hallucinatory Splendor

By Jennifer Riley

Part of the wonder of Sandi Slone's mostly large scale deliriously deceptive new paintings is that they are made by hand using ordinary tools, paints and a short list of additives. The radiant expanse of colors that span the mineral to the synthetic in fluid gestures, rich textures and shimmering veils of translucency evoke vastly different responses on both a macro and a micro level. We can't be sure of what we are seeing as our orientation to it fluctuates from topographical to telescopic to normal. As the eye swoops in for a closer look we understand the terrain is paint.

Slone's painted terrains are meditations on the materiality of color as much as they are objects that present mesmerizing visions of aspects of our world and, perhaps, parallel ones. Infinity, we are reminded, goes in all directions. The illusion of space here, as in her painting "Madame Blavatsky" (2011), appears to be simultaneously deep and volumetric. Slone's refined yet experimental approach comes out of her wealth of experience exploring avant-garde practices, including process art and abstract expressionism, over a career beginning in the 70's during the first wave of the women's movement. Yet it is her fascination with the experience of, in the words of the artist, "using paint as paint to carry thoughts that are seemingly imbedded in one's life and history and are revealed in the work " that consolidates her disparate sources, concerns, and her stunning embrace of color. Slone's kindred spirits in terms of visionary imagery and controlled, layered gestures include artists as diverse as Gerhard Richter, Barnaby Furnace, Helen Frankenthaler and

Keith Tyson's poured "Nature Paintings". However, Slone's work is in a category all her own, drawing from sources as wide-spread as bluegrass music and the Beastie Boys to Walt Whitman, whose poetry inspired this exhibition's title; there is as well her abiding interest in particle physics and space telescopes

Slone's process consists of building the painting slowly with large fields of liquid color over dry layers using big brushes, and an array of tools that includes brooms, wide spreading spatulas and gravity. Like Pollock she works on the floor, but unlike Pollock she has an actual physical engagement with the canvas in such actions as lifting the wet painting to create flows and blends. Subsequent sessions can go on for months and do not always consist of pouring big layers. Sometimes areas are worked with small brushes, or a loaded housepainter's brush creeps over an area that is deeply layered and transparent. Some of the outcome is left to chance, yet much is the result of the artist's rigorous control of the medium during moments of chaos, acting upon irreversible decisions and sacrificing -at times- beautiful passages to push the image to a place of surprise. In "Surface To Air", one of the several 62 x 62 inch canvases, shimmering fantastical colors of hot pink and reds, earthen green-gray, gold and violet seem caught as they cluster and disperse. It appears at first glance that one of the more identifiable images is of an imagined deep outer space, but on closer view the entire top has brutal traces of a large brush where a sly iridescent blur careens from edge to edge. It is in moments like this that the artist most strongly reasserts the gesture as captured matter and energy. And, in so doing , causes the painting to teeter between illusion and object, again, bringing us to that initial moment of uncertainty, curiosity and splendor.

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