



ART REVIEW: “With Abstract Certainty” Presents Beauty in Sweeping Motions in Painting & Sculpture

October 20, 2018

by Pat Rogers

Those who doubt contemporary abstraction can emotionally move viewers should be sure to stop into The White Room Gallery in Bridgehampton, NY. The four artist exhibition demonstrates just how moving contemporary abstraction can be. Combines painting, installation, sculpture and drawing, “With Abstract Certainty” demonstrates the range contemporary abstraction can roam and provides a peaceful hiatus from the everyday.

Curated in a way that allows the eye to sweep from artwork to artwork and from artist to artist, “With Abstract Certainty” is among the strongest shows presented by the gallery this year. The group show reflects a relatively new path chosen by co-directors Andrea McCafferty and Kat O’Neill as they seek out accomplished artists on the national and international scene and present their work in concert with others of their ilk. These exhibitions continue in tandem with the gallery’s continuing commitment to present emerging and established artists on the East End of Long Island in interesting themed shows.

On view through October 22, 2018, “With Abstract Certainty” features paintings by Kathy Buist and James C. Leonard with polished stainless steel sculptures on stone by Ryan T. Schmidt that are installed liberally throughout the gallery. Drawings, paintings and a site-specific wall installation by Tanya Minhas occupy the front section of the gallery in a near solo show that still allows the work to connect with the paintings and sculptures occupying the main exhibition areas.



Installation View of “With Abstract Certainty” at The White Room Gallery.
Courtesy The White Room Gallery.



Installation featuring Tanya Minhas art at The White Room Gallery. Photo by Pat Rogers.

Minhas's *Corrupted DNA*, 2018, is a compelling work, balancing intricate lines swirling in motion laced upon a deep pool of color, that beckons viewers to explore their complicated world. The title places the work in the realm of science and seemingly references genetic forms that may have been originally familiar to scientists before embarking on a more unusual path. Appearing much like a drawing, *Corrupted DNA* is an acrylic painting. The lines within the work appear as if embroidered with thread, connecting to Minhas's talents as a textile designer.



"Corrupted DNA" by Tanya Minhas, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20 inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

Equally of note, is Minhas's site specific wall installation. The intricate painting makes wonderful use of white space which accentuates the delicate journey stretching across the wall in bands of purple, yellow, gray and orange. Rendered in acrylic, the work is executed in minute detail using a brush that is near paper thin.



Detail of "Wall Drawing" by Tanya Minhas created for The White Room Gallery. Acrylic on wall, dimensions variable. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

Moving into the main exhibition areas, my eyes swept liberally over all the art and seemed unwilling to settle upon any one work. Each artist has a distinct signature, but the work was curated to fully compliment the surrounding artwork. As I took in the curation, peaceful yet anticipatory sensations began to settle in as I started to examine the art more closely. This phenomenon was experienced and expressed by others while I visited the gallery. O'Neill said that peace and bliss have been a recurring reaction to the show. Visitors said they felt a comforting calm as well as subtle energizing as the power of the art began to seep in.

Kathy Buist's paintings conjures the sensation of being in nature without tying itself to a specific landscape. Combining sweeping brush strokes with textural accents, Buist's abstract paintings successfully impart the subtle dramas that can unfold in nature when sky, sea and nature's greenery speak together in a spirited dialogue illuminated in the glow of shifting light.



“Light Middy” by Kathy Buist, 2018. Mixed Media, 48 x 48 inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

Buist consciously spends time outdoors—often on the East End—to soak in the visual interplay and the atmosphere. She brings these sensations and memories with her to the studio where the act of making a painting takes over to create something new, Buist explained in an email. Encouraging viewers to take their own journeys in nature through her work is a quality she strives for.

“The expressive brushwork and the depth of layering the paint allows the viewer to travel throughout the piece,” Buist wrote. “The fluidity of colors and shapes speak of regeneration and life cycles. The transparent luminosity in the works challenges rationality and adds a sense of mystery. The gold in the pieces add another dimension to the works allowing one to pass through yet another place of the subconscious.”



“Vast” by Kathy Buist, 2018. Oil on canvas, 36 x 72 inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

Polished stainless steel sculptures by Ryan T. Schmidt are equally graceful. Infused with a subtle playfulness, his art seems as if swaying in mid-motion. Sensual and arresting, each piece is grounded with a slab of natural stone as if the shiny curving lines wouldn’t stay attached to the earth otherwise.



“Leap of Faith” by Ryan T Schmidt, 2016. Polished stainless steel and stone, 60 x 80 x 10 inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

Schmidt said the inspiration for his art springs from an idea that is captured in a sketch and is transformed during the fabrication until it reaches its final form. Designed to be reflective, his art captivates and entrances. Appearing as near line drawings occupying three-dimensional space, Schmidt’s sculpture is easy to enjoy with *Leap of Faith*, 2016, and *Resurrection*, 2017, personal favorites. He will be installing a new sculpture that will appear on the front grounds at The White Room Gallery this upcoming week (October 22-28, 2018) which will remain on long-term view.

Schmidt's art penchant for smooth arcs and curves in triangular relationships are inspired by St. Louis Arch as well as early passions for Origami, drawing, ceramics and printmaking, he said. Polished stainless steel, while labor intensive, ensures the reflective surface will withstand both external and internal elements to remain as reflective as the day it was made. It also helps to enhance the implied motion of the sculptural forms.

"Atmospheric curves and fluid movement, simple or complex can be reflected in the mirror of the sculpture," Schmidt wrote in an email.



Sketch on Napkin for the future "Inception," 2018, by Ryan T Schmidt.
Photo courtesy of the artist.



"Inception" Ryan T. Schmidt completed in his studio. Photo
courtesy of the artist.



"Inception" by Ryan T. Schmidt installed at the gallery. Courtesy of the
White Room Gallery.

Paintings by James C. Leonard provide firm grounding and counter to more ethereal artworks on view. Inspired, in part, by the thick abstract painting of Gerhard Richter, Leonard's paintings are aggressively textural with landscapes evident within the abstract works. Leonard's work glistens and beckons viewers to come closer and stay awhile. He's not afraid to switch up his color palettes: paintings on view included those with vibrant and bold colors or those settling in with a subdued range of hues.



"Maui Flowers" by James C. Leonard, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 30
inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.



A pair of paintings by James C. Leonard installed at The White Room Gallery. Photo courtesy of The White Room Gallery.

Made with multiple layers of acrylic paint that purposely leave the painting's process exposed as a way of conjuring a history and wonder, Leonard is moved by emotion with his art rising from a "loving response to the physical world," he explained, while remaining connected to the labor intensive process of his art working.

"I'm pulling paint, layering one layer at a time, which creates a sense of history in the painting," he wrote in an email. "It's like looking at a fence post that's been repainted over a period of time. You can see the different colors and layers. The physical process is contemporary, using a squeeze. The creative process is an ancient one, plumbing the depth of my soul to return with such beauty and imagination like the world has never seen."

The exhibition at The White Room Gallery does hold a favorite for Leonard: *Crayon Box #2*, 2018. Colorful yet also subdued, the painting is a complicated one with much to visually ponder.

"The colors work, the composition works, the visual information that needs to be communicated gets communicated," he explained.



"Crayon Box #2" by James C. Leonard, 2018. Acrylic on canvas, 54 x 54 inches. Courtesy The White Room Gallery.

"With Abstract Certainty" is on view through October 22, 2018 at The White Room Gallery in Bridgehampton, NY. The show is co-curated by gallery co-directors Andrea McCafferty and Kat O'Neill.

BASIC FACTS: "[With Abstract Certainty](#)" presents art by Kathy Buist, James Leonard, [Tanya Minhas](#) and Ryan T Schmidt. The exhibition is on view through October 22, 2018 at [The White Room Gallery](#), 2415 Main Street, Bridgehampton, NY 11932.

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