

Review

THE CRITICAL STATE OF VISUAL ART IN NEW YORK

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Sandi Slone

Cristinerose Gallery
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BY ROBERT C. MORGAN

SANDI SLONE RECEIVED critical acclaim for her lyric expressionist paintings in the late Seventies and Eighties. In the Nineties, her work progressed from the purely abstract configurations of color to more personal, often diaristic paintings, using elements such as pebbles, photographs, typography, and other small objects affixed to the surface.

With this exhibition of new work, Ms. Slone has returned to her former project, a strategy of reviving - perhaps even revising - the tradition of lyric abstraction in painting. For the most part, the exhibition is a successful one; that is, successful as an exhibition about painting at the service of the gestural nuance.

Slone has gone so far as to extend the brushstroke further from the hand or wrist operation and to push the paint using brooms. This lessens the intensity of the nuance, yet at the same time heightens the sensory aspect of the surface, thus making the surface a more direct encounter with the force of the body motion and with the intensity of the color that is selected and mixed into the process.

Part determined, part aleatory, Slone's new paintings have the potential (the right word here) to raise a consciousness about abstraction in painting beyond the trivialities of academic formalism and to enter into a revival of the origins of form in painting. One could make the argument that there is an implicit feminism in the fact that Slone's using brooms to paint, but I think such linguistic applications have been exhausted to the point of nausea.

Whether about the body or about feminism is less the point of these remarkable paintings (for the most part). What is the point is the energy of the surface as a lyric endeavor; in fact, Slone is engaged in a kind of adventure with the surface - the tactile resonance of the painting.

The side room in which she has constructed a floor installation with paintings and photographs on the wall should have been left out of the exhibition entirely. It distracts from what makes Slone's an interesting artist - her will to stick by an idea that is essentially for the love of the craft; that is, the craft within the art - a discourse that needs to be revived and needs to be taken more seriously as the essence of painting, perhaps even more than the spelling out of intentions.

Slone's persuasive argument in her better work is to assert that the force of pushing paint can be a profound act - if that force carries the persistence, focus, and tenacity of feeling.

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