

point—perhaps only a few inches wide—to blunted points at top and bottom. There is typically a cleft down the middle, as if the piece had split open—not for organic reasons, however, but for the purpose of revelation. Yet the miniature and indistinct interior shape that is revealed merely heightens the object's overall mystery.

The application of color to the pieces is skillfully unobtrusive; they don't seem like "painted sculpture." Though from a distance the surfaces appear solid in color (a dark red on two of the works is particularly effective), at close range underpainting in a contrasting color can be seen, producing a mottled appearance—as if the object had aged and weathered naturally.

Sometimes Bolt departs from his typical format: one of the works is horizontal (12½ by 88 by 3½ inches), straight-edged along the top, stepped at either end,

Macyn Bolt: Untitled, 1986, mixed mediums, 32 by 10½ by 7 inches; at Hal Bromm.

with a graceful curve along the bottom. It might be a symbolic ritual ship—or it might not. There are many intimations of specific material things in these pieces, but nothing can be pinned down. The artist's distillations are complete.

The work most quietly resistant to precise interpretation is atypical in terms of its shape and was also the smallest exhibited (26½ by 31 by 10 inches). It is triangular, swelling up and outward from its bottom-most point. A rift runs down its middle, as if an inner tension is forcing the two halves apart—as if something will inexorably make its way out. Considering its size, the piece projects a good deal of compressed energy.

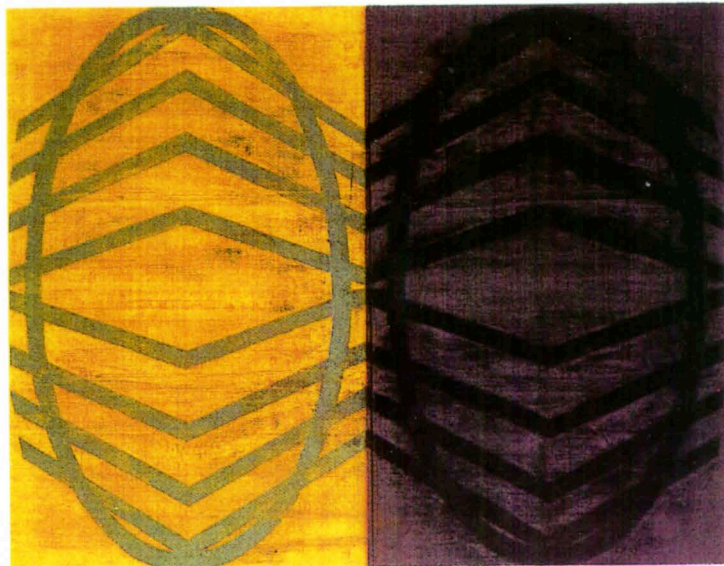
That Bolt's newest pieces articulated a fully realized style less than a year after a show of his figurative work seems remarkable. In general, Bolt seems to have abandoned the narrative path of his earlier sculpture for the greater possibilities of the implicit. There is something intensely yet eloquently nonverbal in these new pieces; they emanate a subtle and primal emotive power.

—Tony Towle

Paul Wonner at Hirschl & Adler Modern

The California style of painterly figuration developed during the late '50s by Richard Diebenkorn, David Park and Paul Wonner, among others, today has a faintly poignant air about it, perhaps because it was relatively so short-lived. Park died young; Diebenkorn abandoned the figure for the elegant but repetitive "Ocean Park" series, and while Paul Wonner was one of the few who continued to resist modernist trends, he has spent the last 20 years or so on still lifes rather than the full-sized landscapes and more ambitious nudes of the early '60s.

Wonner's recent show at Hirschl & Adler Modern, however, included large figure paintings that seem to mark a return of sorts to those earlier times. The titles of the paintings—*The Five Senses*, *Triumph of Bacchus*, *To Flora*—and his inclusion of books on Caravaggio and Rembrandt among the complex setups for the paintings, attest to his ambitions and sources. We are meant to read these paintings in the way that a 17th-century audience might have read a Dutch still life or genre painting—with autobio-



David Row: Sound, 1987, oil and wax on canvas, 66 by 84 inches; at John Good (review on p. 162).

David Row at John Good

David Row's paintings—mostly diptychs—are collisions of bold, mirrored geometric patterns. Ruggedly scaled bands of even width enter each panel, either from the sides or from the top and bottom, in the shape of concentric ellipses, diamonds, DNA-like helixes or staggered ladders. The patterning is often complicated by the overlapping of an angular progression with a curvilinear one, which creates intriguing rhythms and counterpoints within the structuring bands. The paintings are dominated by only two or three hues each, and the pattern/ground colors reverse where the diptych panels meet. This color reversal generates a further structural complication (these may be the most complex simple paintings you'll ever see, or else the most simple complex ones).

Row integrates his powerful compositions into the *space* of the painting—that is, the world existing in the mind's eye of the artist—through the means of a carefully controlled nocturnal light that is as filmic as it is atmospheric. He achieves luminosity in his work by brushing the paint on and scraping it down over a dark ground that shows through from beneath. Each color appears to have something of the other in it, and the lighter hues glow with a gaslight equivocality. Though the patterns themselves pose sequences of expansion and contraction, the dominant

movement in the paintings results from the chromatically softening, scraped-down surface, which flickers like the skips and scratches in an old movie.

Though this was Row's first show in a commercial gallery, his work has been seen several times over the last few years on the alternative-space circuit. This is a body of work that has had time to develop. It doesn't illustrate or capitalize on theory so much as resonate with experience. The symmetries in Row's imagery and his sense of interior and exterior scale trigger a sympathetic response based on our sense of our own corporeality; further, the depicted light is a remembered light. The echoes of modernist abstraction (European geometries and Abstract Expressionist scale) are both an homage to that tradition and an expression of a will to continue it. Within their deeply considered historicism, these are simultaneously alert and reflective paintings.

The hand of the artist is as much a subject of Row's paintings as their mood and historicism are. The vigor in his canvases springs from this combination. The much-abused word "authentic" comes to mind. Realizing that authenticity is subjectively conferred, I'd still like to suggest that Row's work has it in spades. The debut of an "authentic" painter, then.

—Stephen Westfall

