

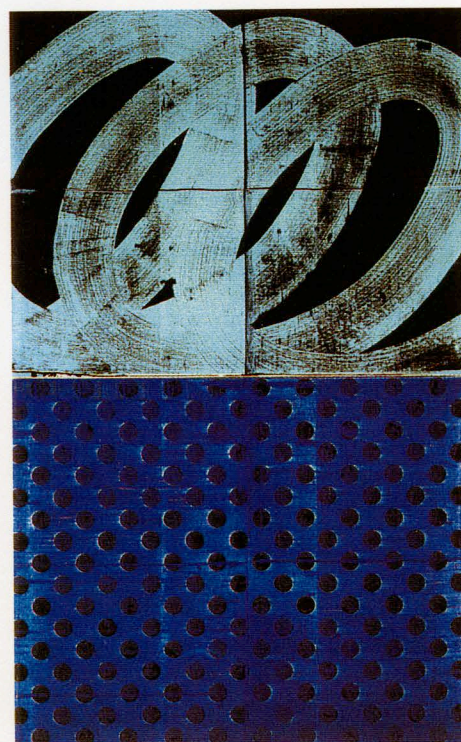
david row

Von Lintel Gallery
New York

In his latest exhibition, *Sensory Information*, David Row showed that even the most committed painter can explore the contemporary territory of technology with elegant, if complicated, results. Like much of Row's recent work, the ten small paintings in this show played with notions of order and chaos. With their arcs and ellipses, the works demonstrated a clear interest in the geometry and mathematics of line and shape. At the same time, his forms were sinuous and organic, inextricably linked to the profundities of their medium. The curved lines consistently abutted the edges of the canvas as if their trajectory were dictated by how they hit the painting's peripheries. Row's use of color also belied any notion of a simple geometry, and the acid colors—orangey peach with watered-down yellow, kinetic blues, and greens—reflected a love of the transformative properties of paint. While this exhibition made clear Row's devotion to painting, it also demonstrated his own susceptibility to the pervasive technological enthusiasm that has swept the art world. Row dealt with this issue in three large paintings in the front gallery

and even more overtly in a wall projection in the back. Row's typical thick, curving lines dominated the tops of the paintings. The lower portions, however, were composed of an ordered series of circles, as if Row's ellipses and curves had finally been corralled. The regularity suggested an ordering system that could be purely mathematical, but that also hinted at the technological—either as a low-tech industrial assembly line of dots or a high-tech computer-generated matrix display. The wall projection *Twenty Years/Two Minutes* (2001) in the back room appeared more like an obligatory foray into the world of video and film. In this piece, the art was mediated by its technological apparatus, thereby losing the compelling immediacy of Row's paintings. When technology alone does all the telling, it is a piece of equipment doing its job rather than a human being making sense of our biological and technological chaos.

Melissa Brookhart



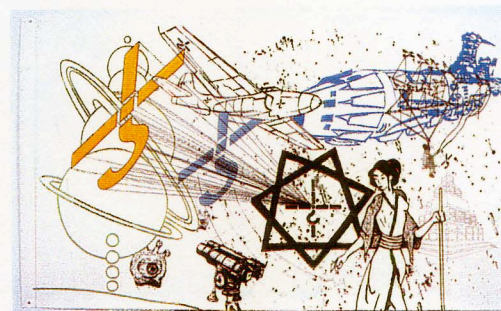
David Row *Visible Darkness*, 2001, diptych, oil and alkyd on canvas, 244 x 152 cm overall.

jesse bransford

Feature Inc
New York

Jesse Bransford dares to go where image-conscious artists fear to tread. Some other young artists, whose work also incorporates fractured architectural renderings, scenes from outer space, and fanciful creatures, share the space-age aesthetic evident in Bransford's eight large drawings and wall mural. However, this artist's attraction to systems of knowledge from around the world and personal fascination with the heavy-metal band Blue Öyster Cult (B.Ö.C.) compel him to investigate beyond the safety zone of fashionable subjects. By incorporating various symbols from astronomy, world mythology, and science fiction in his drawings, the artist has developed a unique vocabulary. In one piece, a huge-eyed extraterrestrial stands on top of a funnel projecting the symbol of Heaven's Gate, the cult whose members organized a mass suicide in California in 1997. Nearby are alien ships, planets, winged beasts, and a giant scarab. In another drawing, a man wearing a top hat and long beard stands in front of a celestial map as he operates an enormous telescope. To his right stands a

creature that is half man, half fish, beyond which appears a question-mark shape associated with B.Ö.C. A giant phallus, a man on a premodern flying machine, and clusters of planets recur in several drawings. As long as human beings persist in asking fundamental questions—"Who are we? What are we doing here?"—science, technology, and mythology will continue to provide inadequate answers. In the meantime, Bransford's accumulated findings make for some interesting imagery. Just as the artist is attracted to B.Ö.C.'s homemade cosmology for its "transhistorical and nonlinear" characteristics, he plunges into alchemical and astrological texts for answers to life's mysteries. In addition to zodiacal diagrams, random symbols, and space-age machinery, Bransford reproduces mutated creatures that are reminiscent of the twisted imagination of Hieronymus Bosch or the satirical engravings of Pieter Bruegel. Bransford's references to iconographic systems from the past, brought into the twenty-first century and combined with symbols of mystical knowledge, produce sometimes



apocalyptic and usually fantastical results. The Dungeons and Dragons edge that pops up now and again, as well as the artist's allusions to heavy-metal imagery, will be like candy to some, poison to others. But when Bransford's worlds collide, they produce a powerful commentary on the search for meaning in life.

Merrily Kerr