

University Gallery

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Natalie Alper: Recent Paintings

April 1 - May 18, 2001

Natalie Alper's abstract paintings are comprised of broad looping brushstrokes that move across the canvas with great swaths of energy. The current exhibition features the artist's recent large-scale paintings and a new series of small works Alper calls "Episodes," simultaneously acknowledging their relationship to the larger works and alluding to a moment of action in a drama or an interlude in a musical composition. The exhibition will open on Saturday, March 31st with a reception from 4 - 6 p.m. at which the artist will be present. *Natalie Alper: Recent Paintings* will continue through May 18th.

Alper uses acrylic paints tuned to an earthy palette of greens, blues, reds and browns in combination with metallic paints and iridescent pigments which create shimmering effects on the painting surface. Though they have no direct reference to nature, these abstract inventions are metaphors for elemental power and mutability. The artist begins a painting by covering the ground with a pencilled understructure of 'writing', which serves as a form of meditation and effectively structures the painting with a dynamic grid. For Alper, and for many contemporary painters, the synthesis of the gesture and the grid is a compelling issue - the gesture gives the painting body and tactility and the grid creates order out of potential chaos. To restrain her fluid, dynamic canvases Alper removes paint in thin grid-like lines which act as a field of containment and reinforce the "surfacedness" of the paintings.

Alper has stated "I'm intrigued by phenomena of chaos science where the most imperceptible variations that occur at the beginning of a natural process lead to vastly different outcomes. I'm excited by a quest for a life that is vital and in flux - from subatomic particle streaks to glimpses of the rings of Saturn, from the Deluge Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci to the mazes of Piranesi and Johann Sebastian Bach, from the fullness of the empty spaces of Cezanne to quattrocento painting, from Mozart to Mondrian to Agnes Martin, from the Eden of Monet to the cosmologies of Cy Twombly and Jackson Pollock, to the muscularity of the Baroque and the passions of Tintoretto. I'm lured by the expressive force of Baroque art, the crescendo towards a center, with volume moving out into the viewer's space, and I'm lured by its opulence."

Natalie Alper lives and works in Brookline, Massachusetts and until 1993 was on the painting faculty of the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Her work has been shown in many one-person and group exhibitions, most recently at the Lehigh University Art Galleries in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and in *Order/Disorder* at the Bell Gallery, List Art Center, Brown University.