

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

It is very difficult to make a painting about love.

While Rebecca Rutstein's paintings do not immediately appear to be about the drama and pain of personal relationships, the titles lead us in that direction—*topsy-turvy*, *you move me*, *i couldn't sleep last night*. Rutstein is essentially an abstract painter even though she often uses recognizable images borrowed from the realm of geology—maps, diagrams, land formations. These images provide, first and foremost, a formal vocabulary that anchors her compositions. But they also tether her emotional paintings to the world of reason and science.

We immediately have to wonder why Rutstein revisits over and over this apparently cool and concrete scientific material in her work. What we notice is that the would-be academic information is set-off by the artist to reveal a latent emotional and dramatic content. Rutstein's paintings reveal something deeper—she looks to the earth for the emotional energy it seems to have absorbed through time. The striations, layers of material, evidence of explosions and lava flows, the stalactites and stalagmites formed patiently over time, all are metaphors for the human psyche.

Looking across a number of Rutstein's paintings, we are left with the impression of a diary of sorts. The repeated square format of the paintings gives them a consistency not unlike the pages of a book. Each painting captures the tenor of a particular moment.

For Rutstein perhaps the search for some truth about the human world, and our emotional lives in it, has lead her to look past whatever more obvious philosophies and religious beliefs might tell us and to an older and more tangible source of truth—the earth beneath our feet. The artist looks to geology not for what it might reveal about the earth, but for what it might reveal about the humans that inhabit it.

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