

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Exhibition Essay: Moving Into Deeper Water

Tim McFarlane's abstract paintings have always concerned themselves with people, place and the flow of energy in the world. In his new works, the artist enters cosmic territory creating the ambiance of life itself coming at you, many-layered and beautiful, in a steady unstoppable flow.

McFarlane's abstract paintings have changed over the years from geometric meta-landscapes to these new works with their loosely-knit veils of color. What's common through the years is the sense of humanity expressed through the artist's touch which is ever present and through the vocabulary of repeat shapes that suggest communities, swarms and masses of individuals living side by side and breathing in parallel through time immemorial.

McFarlane is an exquisite colorist, and his palette is full of radical and unexpected moves. *Pass, 2007*, couples mango, mint green, warm pinks and blood reds. It sounds chaotic but it works. He's especially good layering white on top of darker shades making it zing and at the same time a foil for the deeper shades. Tintoretto the Italian Renaissance master drew with white on top of black, knowing white's power. In our time, Robert Ryman too creates white veils and Sean Scully pits white against dark in his checkerboard paintings. But McFarlane has found a way to make white his own through his vocabulary of almost calligraphic shapes and his great color sense.

The artist's studio is like a science laboratory and the artist is like an explorer. McFarlane works big, small, thin, thick, and, here in this show, translucent and juicy with glimpses of unprimed canvas. The artist loves the process as much as the product.

The delight for the viewer who slows down and peers into the interstices is the glimpse of the great beyond, what lies just out of sight, the greener grass, the holy grail, something beautiful, mysterious, and worth looking for. Some may see frustration in the heavy veils and peekaboo affect of the works. But to me the artist is raising the issue of the importance of seeing beyond the veil and the satisfaction of exploring and moving into deeper waters.

McFarlane's quiet and affirmative works suggest the richness of life – past, present and future – pulsing together in the cosmos.

–Roberta Fallon is a Philadelphia artist and writer who co-founded the popular art blog *roberta fallon and libby rosos's artblog*, <http://fallonandrososof.blogspot.com>