

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

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Galleries By Edith Newhall

'Karmic Abstraction' in a sleekly renovated space

It's hard to say which is more impressive: The renovation of Bridgette Mayer Gallery, which has turned the former parlor floor and cellar beneath it into sleek, muted, minimalist spaces while retaining some of their 18th-century features, or the sprawling, colorful group show of mainly abstract paintings celebrating that transformation. But there's no question that the latter, "Karmic Abstraction," inhabits the gallery's new and improved quarters as if designed to test their architectural refinements.

The show's theme — that all contemporary abstract painting embodies or reflects on the history of art — is fleshed out successfully in most of the works in this 16-artist exhibition, starting with the first paintings you see in the front room. They are Thomas Nozkowski's handsome untitled oil painting of solid forms, reminiscent of late Guston paintings and Brancusi's sculpture *The Kiss*; and Odili Donald Odita's *Electric City*, a huge acrylic of angular, vertical geometric shapes in a composition that seems equally informed by color-field painting, op-art, and art deco art and architecture, but also by African art (Odili grew up in the American Midwest but was born in Nigeria). The two monochromatic phthalo-blue paintings with punctured sur-



An untitled oil painting by Thomas Nozkowski, part of a show at Bridgette Mayer Gallery.

"Untitled II," by Robert Goodman, part of "Jungle Gothic," an exhibition of his works at Seraphin Gallery.

faces by Los Angeles artist Joe Goode look wonderful in their close proximity to Nozkowski and Odita.

Speaking of phthalo blue, that turquoise hue shows up everywhere in this show — in Leslie Wayne's accumulations of vertical slices of paint, in Matthew Fischer's modestly scaled, broad-stroked oil paintings that recall aspects of Howard Hodgkin's work, in Neil Anderson's oil *Cleopatra's Barge*, in Arden Bendler Browning's monumental gouache and Flashe painting on paper that suggests a cityscape seen through a kaleidoscope, and in Ryan McGinness' mesmerizing *Black Hole*

and *Sponsorship Redux* painting and print. There's even a little pool of turquoise in the lower left of Tim McFarlane's *Constant Flux*.

As Mayer clearly knew, having an internationally known lineup like McGinness, Nozkowski, Odita, and Scottish artist Graeme Todd — all of whom have recently joined the gallery's ranks, as have Bender Browning, Fischer, Wayne, Radcliffe Bailey, Iva Gueorguieva, Eemyun Kang, and Nathan Pankratz — would make "Karmic Abstraction" a must-see. She needn't have included the works of her long-standing artists, but contributions from Anderson,



McFarlane, Charles Burwell, and Rebecca Rutstein happen to shine in this company. Now, that's karma.

Bridgette Mayer Gallery, 709 Walnut St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. 215-413-8893 or www.bridgettemayergallery.com. Through Dec. 31.

Painting primeval

Robert Goodman's latest paintings catch him moving from his abstract compositions of sharp geometric forms that seemed to be in the process of exploding to a softer, curvier, quasi-representational abstraction influ-

enced by the tropical environment of south Florida, where he grew up. The paintings that make up his exhibition, "Jungle Gothic," at Seraphin Gallery, are also darker than his earlier works, although some of his signature fluorescent pinks and oranges glimmer through the shade.

These paintings have none of Goodman's shattering, over-the-top urban energy. Instead, the dense compositions of works such as *Pyramid* (2011) and *Fewer* (2011) bring to mind swamps, heat, and ecstatic religious trances. One's eye is pulled into the depths of palms and cypresses by passages that look like clearings and rivers.

In Goodman's earlier paintings, there was intentionally no *there* there. By contrast, these paintings envelop a viewer in a sense of place. It may be the Everglades or Goodman's personal vision of nature, but it draws you in.

Seraphin Gallery, 1108 Pine St., 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. 215-923-7000 or www.seraphingallery.com. Through Dec. 4.

Good show

After a year-and-a-half run of excellent shows under director Travis Heck, Jolie Laide Gallery will close in December. But the gallery is going out on a high note with its

darkly beautiful "Bleach," inspired by Nirvana's debut album and pairing the sculpture of Alex Da Corte and the paintings of Paul DeMuro.

Da Corte, a Philadelphia artist who has shown his work at the ICA, MoMA, and Los Angeles' Hammer Museum, among other places, summons the frustration and anger of the 1989 album with his *Silver Veilouria Gaze*, two chrome-plated plastic Guitar Hero guitars sprinkled with pigment powder; *Anonymous Face*, comprising a broken ceramic pumpkin filled with hair conditioner; and *Acid Jeans*, a pair of jeans painted with metallic pigments, among other works.

DeMuro, a Philadelphia living in Brooklyn, honors the album's cover art, a black-and-white negative, with his palette of acid green, yellow, gray, black, and white, derived from colors and shades in the photographic negatives of his own earlier works.

Echoes between Da Corte's metallic surfaces and nocturnal colors and DeMuro's similar palette reverberate throughout this show, most serendipitously in the reflection of DeMuro's painting *Pinhead* on Da Corte's guitars.

Jolie Laide Gallery, 224 N. Juniper St., 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. www.jolieaide.com. Through Dec. 16.