

CLAIRE SEIDL: ROSENBERG + KAUFMAN FINE ART

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CLAIRE SEIDL

To state that Jackson Pollock casts a shadow over twentieth-century American art is to utter a convention. Like most conventions, however, this one obscures as much as it illuminates. For Pollock-the-myth has so eclipsed Pollock-the-artist that one question is rarely asked: How good of a painter was he, really? Looking at the work of artists who have been influenced by him - Sam Francis, say, or Brice Marden - I am struck by how much better their paintings are than Pollock's. Pollock may be an artist whose influence is of greater significance than the work he created.

Judging from her recent show, Claire Seidl has been looking at, and thinking about, Pollock's paintings, and it has done her immense good. This exhibition displayed Seidl gaining depth as a painter, taking Pollock's all-over linearity and making it her own. Her trailing lines can spread out over the expanse of the canvas, coalesce into forms, or nudge against each other. Working intuitively, Seidl abjures the programmatic and remains open to the experience (and uncertainties) of painting. This approach can amount to a kind of bravery.

claireseidl.com

Of course, bravery counts for bupkes if the work isn't any good, but Seidl's paintings here are very good indeed. The crowd-pleaser is *The Eye of the Glass Blower*, a picture in which the paint handling is so luscious that only an anti-painting zealot could fail to be seduced by it. Better still was *The Purse Stealer's Eye is Yellow*, wherein Seidl rhymes broad brush strokes and looping doodles against a silvery yellow ground. The final result is a kind of Luminist hokey-pokey, with a dollop of Hans Hoffman's push and pull mixed in for good measure. I don't have an encyclopedic knowledge of Seidl's oeuvre, but if someone told me *The Purse Stealer's Eye is Yellow* was the best picture she had ever painted, I would not question the point.

In her accompanying catalogue essay, Tiffany Bell notes that Seidl's paintings are "without irony." Having become the province of the artistically challenged, irony is a cheap commodity in our culture, and Seidl will have none of it. Her work forthrightly attempts to come with terms with painting, and with that most illusive of entities, beauty. With *The Purse Stealer's Eye is Yellow* and a few of her works on paper, Seidl does just that.