

# Energy, vision surface in paintings

By Dorothy Shinn  
Beacon Journal art critic

When Claire Seidl's work was first shown at John Davis Gallery in 1983, her paintings seemed to be full of light and air. They revealed an unabashed revelry in both the plasticity of paint and the luminosity of a high-keyed palette.

Her paintings were pleasant, easy to look at and to be around, but were certainly never meant to stir one's soul.

Somewhere between that first exhibit and this one, Ms. Seidl became ambitious to do more, and her current show contains the seed of that ambition. With it, Ms. Seidl and a handful of other New York artists hope to bring back to painting the kind of energy and vision that has not been fashionable in New York art circles for three decades.

Ms. Seidl is a Connecticut native. She studied at Sir John Cass College of Art, London Polytechnic; College of Visual and Performing Arts, Syracuse University; and Hunter College, City University of New York, where she received her Master of Fine Arts.

In addition to two solo shows at John Davis Gallery, she has been in numerous group shows in the northeast and had a solo exhibit last fall at Stephen Rosenberg Gallery, New York.

For this exhibit, Davis selected 10 paintings. At least one of those, *Moose Calls*, was in the show at Rosenberg Gallery last November — a show that received a favorable review in Arts Magazine.

The works, which can be seen at John Davis Gallery through July 20, are each a milestone in the journey Ms. Seidl has taken since she was last seen here.

Her paintings have become not only less self-consciously entranced with the materiality of paint, but less pleasant. That is to say, they are more demanding of the viewer.



Claire Seidl's *Jupiter Line Up '85*.

## REVIEW

Although her palette has remained high-keyed, it is gradually growing darker. Her imagery is becoming less polite and more muscular.

Whereas her earlier paintings were based on a kind of expressionistic landscape, her current output seems grounded in an interior universe of grasping, aggressive shapes and harsh contrasts.

These works are restless and energetic — challenging — and one would suspect, difficult to live with over the long haul. They won't settle in over the sofa and become domesticated.

But there are ample compensations.

Still concerned with surface

modulation, Ms. Seidl applies the paint thickly and with apparent vigor.

Her eye for color is unerring and adroit. Blues resonate against yet deeper blues; greens shimmer beside them; reds do their red/blue thing and careen away, crashing into blacks and yellows.

Her brush (and palette knife) still revel in the lusciousness and viscosity of oil paint — the speed or drag with which bristles can sweep through a trough of pigment, the clean glide with which a palette knife can land one color atop another and never disturb the substructure.

The coiling shapes that dominate these works seem to be created to reach us in some subconscious way. And they do, set-

ting up feelings of apprehension and unease.

If there is criticism to be leveled at these works, it could only be that — like many a young artist — she tries to pack her first serious work with every important thing she has to say. This gives the work a feeling of frenetic activity just for the sake of it.

But she's on her way to some place important. It's apparent that she's quite pleased with her progress and wants to make sure everyone takes notice. And we did.

John Davis Gallery, located at 161 South Main St., Akron, is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays though Fridays and noon to 5 p.m. Saturdays.