

Review

April 15, 2000

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These are two strong exhibitions by abstract painters who create cohesive and compelling visions. Both also have unique personal histories. Peter Wayne Lewis, son of a jazz musician, was born in Jamaica and lived in Panama and California before coming east as an adult. The other artist grew up on a Nebraska farm in a large multi-cultural adoptive family before he headed to New York to be an artist.

Both artists deal with a dichotomy of form, and while using similar painterly elements, each has developed a very different solution. They have in common a densely pigmented palette and an organic linear sensibility that plays off of geometric imagery, and they also continue to develop their visual language in an evolutionary process that keeps the paintings alive.

Peter Wayne Lewis still incorporates a solid textural "frame" of color around a central rectangle, creating essentially two realms: inner and outer -- that set each other off. In the past, these separate arenas, while not fighting each other, appeared in a way to compete, creating a tension as to which part was dominant. But now, the two realms seem to be each more complete within themselves, more independent, as if each could easily become the entire composition. Their conjunction and relationship to each other is calmer, however, more complimentary and supportive than competitive. The outer area, with its monotonal, rhythmic surface, has solidified on the picture plane, while the inner area weaves a connection between push and pull, between an infinite floating space and the picture plane that brings dynamic tension into the imagery.

There has always been a sense of strength and sureness in Lewis' painting, but his imagery is now both more classic and more concise. At the same time, it is more tender, more expressive, as if a maturing process has occurred allowing a delicate exploratory stroke to thrive that takes greater pleasure in the voyage, the merging along the way with other colors and forms. In some of the paintings, this exploration has lent a feel of landscape to the imagery, but this appears less like a definite direction than a stopping point along the way. Lewis' next exhibition will tell us much.