

Major new canvases by Denise Regan provide a strong summary of her current interests in synthesized forms, expressive colors, and vibrantly articulated surfaces. They also suggest that Regan is introducing abstractions of visual experiences and possibly touching on complex issues involving contemporary perception.

Most subjects — a vase or a stand of trees perhaps — are gently askew and without illusional orientation and can be perceived as just one fragmentary registering of a visual and cognitive sensation within a larger world of infinite sensations. The feeling of merged elements belonging to a broader sphere is reinforced by independent units of color on a flat field, by surface patterns, and by the slightly off-kilter, swiftly read commonplace themes. These carefully crafted paintings expand the possibilities for depicting the fluid linkages that are part of our shifting cyberspace sensibilities.

Assertive, inventive color has been a major force in Regan's work throughout her career, and it plays a dominant role in a painting's initial impact. In the current work color takes on a number of additional functions, contributing to a feeling of abstraction and also helping to establish surface resonance by juxtaposing spectrum neighbors such as red and orange, or spectrum opposites such as red and green or blue and gold. The artist's own sense of cerebral and celebratory color is now augmented by the vast panorama of sky and water tonalities that surround her new studio setting on Shelter Island. Nature's palette stimulates her personal approach to creating colors that serve as emotional equivalents.

The synthesizing of form that is so basic to Regan's work lends further intensity. In each thematic direction — still-life, landscape or figure-in-interior, a pared down shape with organic contours seems to generate its own internal power. A substantial amount of intellectualizing is part of the procedure, with many paintings having their roots in the artist's practice of drawing extensively in oil on paper. The intellectual intervention involved in arriving at a perfect synthesis of interactive, expressive shapes is particularly apparent in a small landscape like "Above the Dunes."

Animated surfaces also make an important contribution to the impact. Regan's vocabulary here seems enormous. Sometimes dripping color or swirling gestures produce a feeling of movement and sometimes there is a heightened physicality that stems from overlapping buttery passages of thick pigment. There are instances when the paint seems to retain the dynamic of its initial application, and other occasions when it forms patterns that lead to hypnotic, almost hallucinatory effects.

The new sea paintings offer a special kind of optical vigor as their layers of spirited brush marks interact with a glowing undercoating of metallic pigment. The marks simultaneously capture a sensation and brilliantly articulate the canvas surface. Everything seems alive and pushing to deliver maximum force. The metallics and patterning may be constructs of the imagination, yet canvases like "Out to Sea" and "Japan Sea" serve as perfect surrogates for nature's own energies.

In the sea themes, as well as the entire body of recent work, Regan builds on her studio practices to create paintings that ultimately forge links with some extra-sensory place just beyond customary vision.

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