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Mintz, Donna. "More engaging conversation about painting in 'Abstract part 2' at Marcia Wood Gallery," ArtsATL. January 16, 2014.

*Abstract part 2*, a spirited show of small, colorful work at Marcia Wood Gallery through January 18, continues the conversation about abstract painting begun with its predecessor, abstract part 1. As in the previous show, the interactions among the four artists are testament of Wood's keen eye and the pleasure of serendipity.

The lively dialogue among this quartet of artists serves best by raising important questions of form, color and material. Relationships and comparisons emerge to deepen the experience of looking: here the sum is greater than the parts.

The front room features a pairing of artists working with color and shape in different ways. Deborah Zlotsky, who teaches at Rhode Island School of Design, presents four small oils on panel. Her brightly colored biomorphic forms are animated by texture and relationship. Shapes of cerulean, saffron, lime green or ice blue push against each other and against the picture plane, suggesting their movement through a natural world, if not landscape, and inviting comparison to patterns and anomalies in nature. It really doesn't matter, though, what we are looking at; these are paintings to explore and enjoy.



Clark Derbes' Kay (polychromed maple wood) in foreground. Deborah Zlotsky's paintings in back

Clark Derbes, from Vermont by way of Louisiana, brings craft to the art of abstraction. His self-described "sculptures of paintings of sculptures" are carved from elm or maple with a chainsaw and finished with intricate painted geometrics to achieve a trompe l'oeil "3-D flattened box effect." They occupy the walls, shelves and even a pedestal top with

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a sly sense of wit and whimsy and a shape and surface that keep you looking to make sure you know what you are seeing.

A quieter engagement is required to experience Amanda Hughen's milky palimpsests of delicate beauty in the second gallery. In work from her Associated Press series, the San Francisco-based artist abstracts shapes culled from jewelry ads in the New York Times using the color palette from adjacent news photographs in the same issue. Hughen repeats her chosen shape with ink and acrylic paint on multiple sheets of Mylar or paper, layering them to weightless effect.

The lively "touch-me" surfaces of Ohio artist Lorri Ott share the room, providing a different experience of color, texture and form and a foil to the intimacy of Hughen's work. Ott's on-the-wall constructions are made with liquid plastic (resin and pigments) poured onto linen, plastic bags and found wood. Some, in which plastic is poured onto linen stretched on wooden frames, resemble painting. Others are manipulated into shapes that are much more sculptural. The surfaces are compelling, but it is the works' ambiguity — are they painting, sculpture, a hybrid, or neither? — that raises interesting questions.

Despite the similarities among the eight artists in the two shows, it is the interplay of each artist's unique take on abstraction that enlivens the discussion. Wood wisely kept a sampling of the work from the first installment and has hung it salon-style in her back room, so that, for instance, one can compare the textural collages of Barbara Campbell Thomas and Jeff Conefry's thick paint and exposed linen constructs — both from the earlier show — with Ott's assemblages.

Similarly, Sydney Cohen's animated, organic shapes would hold their own in the room with Zlotky's, and they, in turn, make an interesting juxtaposition to Derbes' work. So many conversations make Marcia Wood Gallery a great place to eavesdrop.