



TOM BOLLES

Painter

Statement

My minimal acrylic paintings are multiple layers (70 to 100) of translucent acrylic paint applied with a palette knife. My image and text based paintings are first created on a computer, digitally printed onto canvas, then painted over. My resin pieces are usually acrylic paintings mounted onto hard substrates, then coated with several layers of tinted polyester resin. No matter the medium, no matter the subject matter, my goal is to make art that possesses both a subtlety and a richness that make it enduring

Education

1975 University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Solo and Two Person Exhibitions

2015

"Stripes", Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2014

Tom Bolles and Matthew G. Craig, Hooloion Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

"Just Looking", Oceana Gallery, Pacifica CA

2013

Tom Bolles and Andrew Burgess, Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2011

"Little People", SFMOMA Artists Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2010

"Back to Basics", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2008

"Half of Love and Other Paintings", Caffè Museo, San Francisco, CA

2007

"Subliminal", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2003

"Monochromatic", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2001

Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SFMOMA Artists Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1998

Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA



1995

"Introductions '95", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA
SFMOMA Rental Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1993

"Artworks with Neon", Sunnyvale Creative Arts Center Gallery, Sunnyvale, CA

1991

Kathryn Sermas Gallery, New York, NY

1990

"Geometry on Site", SoHo Center for Visual Artists, New York, NY

Group Exhibitions

2016

New York Invitational, George Billis Gallery, New York, NY

2015

"Celebrating Ruth", Fouladi Projects, San Francisco, CA ANDLABS Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013

"3+2+1", Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2012

"Summer In South Park (Again)", Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2010

Philagrafika Bahdeebahdu Gallery, Philadelphia, PA

2009

"Super Flat", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2008

"Holiday Special", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2007

"Coming Attractions", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2004

"Suspension", ANDLAB Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2003

"Branching Out", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA

2002

Arts Council Annual Juried Exhibition, Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA

1999

"New Space", Braunstein/Quay Gallery, San Francisco, CA
January Juried Exhibition, Gallery Route One, Pt. Reyes, CA



1998

20th Anniversary Show, SFMOMA Rental Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1995

Arts Council Annual Juried Exhibition, Palm Springs Desert Museum, Palm Springs, CA

'Countdown 2000', 1078 Gallery, Juried Show, Chica, CA

Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

'On Canvas', Joanne Chappell Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1993

'Lightscares', Opts Art, San Francisco, CA

Joanne Chappell Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1992

SOMAR Gallery, San Francisco, CA

Andrea Schwartz Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1991

'Ornithological Structures', A Space, New York, NY

'Penn Prints', Arthur Ross Gallery, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

ART CRITICS

Tom Bolles 2015 Catalog Essay

TOM BOLLES: Stripes

By DeWitt Cheng

Those of us who remember the Sixties—and, yes, we were there—found the abstract art of that time exciting and invigorating, a welcome change from the painterly angst of Fifties Abstract Expressionism, by then grown stale and tired. The large geometric formats, bright palettes and reductive, minimalist mark-making of new paintings by Frank Stella, Barnett Newman, Kenneth Noland, Ellsworth Kelly, Larry Poons and others served as art's objective correlative for postwar American prosperity and optimism: the world made new—or, rather, the New World, feeling its oats and shaking off its deference to Old Europe (supposedly). Powerful art critics promulgated the new style, so that it, too, became mandatory, as AbEx had—for a time. A decade later, however, came another cultural shift. Tom Wolfe mocked the dogmas of 'formalist' abstraction'—i.e., painting about painting itself, as he saw it—in *The Painted Word*, describing Sixties savvy art consumers cocking a slantwise eye at canvases, seeking telltale deviations from the flat canvas surfaces mandated by theory.

Such aesthetic wars now seem quaint in the contemporary pluralist age (with its lukewarm tolerance for the 'interesting'), but the radicalism of earlier art styles can be understood anew—read, for example, Linda Nochlin's exciting book on dreary old realism—and even renewed to



serve the current cultural moment, without ironic art-theory air quotes. That abstraction can act on the human psyche as powerfully as traditional realism is, when you reconsider it, seriously, still radical (even if Barnett Newman's abstract paintings of The Stations of the Cross suffered by comparison, in the opinion of the cantankerous, erudite art critic, Robert Hughes, with Michelangelo's old-school, evergreen, body-centric pathos.

If contemporary artists in general no longer choose a tragic humanist worldview, and incline instead toward experimentation, in keeping with industrial culture, and especially with the expanded range of media now available, the sense of visual presence remains constant. We need to sense human thought in the work itself. The acrylic paintings of San Franciscan Tom Bolles fit generally within the tradition of minimalist abstraction, but, with their stripes, striations, textures and transparent glazes of vibrant color, they seem not only to possess pictorial depth (through their subtle color variations, not perspective), but also to radiate light. They radiate a force field that draws us in and holds us. Some Bolles work reminds us of the fluorescent light works of Dan Flavin; others suggest the experience of space, light and color that we associate with the installation works of James Turrell.

Bolles' paintings have evolved over twenty-five years, and will undoubtedly continue to do so: the exploration of digital art is undoubtedly a sign of things to come for this restless problem-solver (more on this later) who, as he admitted, when I visited his studio recently, cannot visit a house without mentally redesigning it. Bolles' powerful aesthetic and spatial sense derives from growing up in "an art family." His architect father opened the John Bolles Gallery on Gold Street in the Financial District in 1958, when only the better-known Dilexi and Six Galleries showed contemporary art. Bolles: "It was a very small city back then, and everybody knew everybody, and he knew almost everybody, so I grew up in a house filled with artworks by his artist friends," which included Joan Brown and Elmer Bischoff. Other artists whose work filled the home included Hans Hofmann, Arthur Dove, Nathan Oliveira, Pierre Soulages and Ad Reinhardt. When Bolles studied art in college, in Philadelphia—having decided that a career in architecture would mean endless "drawing bathrooms for hotels," and was not for him, he inclined not toward the painterly abstraction and figuration imbibed at home, but toward the cooler, more cerebral work on view in nearby New York City. "I was a real Sixties kid," he reminisced, excited by Frank Stella, Op and Pop Art, and becoming a serious silkscreen printmaker in college, designing rock posters as well as abstract fine-art prints. He was not a 60s rebel avant-gardist, though: when his teacher, the landscape painter Rackstraw Downes, insisted that his students draw realistic oranges, "not ... impressions of oranges," Bolles drew oranges. After college, Bolles' development took various directions—including sculpture in cast resin with and without neon lights, conceptual word art and installation—during his two years in New York, several trips to Italy (where he felt he belonged), and after his 1990 return to San Francisco. Bolles: "I would go off on different tangents, different directions" if bored, or stimulated by new ideas and materials. Eventually he found his way, covering square-format canvases with repeated applications of paint with a palette knife in alternating vertical and horizontal strokes, which yielded unpredictable patterns and textures. These process-based abstractions, with their complex, subtle beauty, brought him to the attention of both the design and fine-art communities.

In the past year, Bolles has incorporated digital art in his toolkit. "It's the twenty-first century. Just doing things the same old way seems silly." Instead of laboriously covering canvases with later after layer of acrylic paint, either full-bodied, from the tube, or thinned into translucent glazes, Bolles begins the works in the computer—an old computer, using an old version of Photoshop—and tweaks the images until they're what he wants to emerge from the printer, ready for



finishing touches with carefully applied paint. Initially, he began, somewhat conceptually, with screens full of zeroes and ones, which he typed or copy-pasted, and then distorted into linear grids. These Matrix arrays can be discerned in several works, veil after veil superposed and adjusted in hue, chroma, intensity and opacity/transparence to create flickering fields; what the printer could not achieve, Bolles finished with layers of translucent acrylic paint and topcoats of tinted resin. The resulting works, hybrid products of traditional 'analogue' studio practice and the new digital media, combine Bolles' experience with materials with his interest in doing new things creatively with new materials, a la Jackson Pollock, who wrote in the late 1940s, "New needs need new techniques." He continues: "...Modern artists have found new ways and new means of making their statements... the modern painter cannot express this age, the airplane, the atom bomb, the radio, in the old forms of the Renaissance or of any other past culture.... It doesn't make much difference how the paint is put on as long as something has been said. Technique is just a means of arriving at a statement." Bolles remembers discovering in New York, "It's the final product that counts." Having successfully shed his Bay Area predilection for bohemian expressive messiness, Bolles makes works are state-of-the-art new in technique, but endowed with the pictorial authority of abstraction's Old Masters.

-DeWitt Cheng