

VISUAL ART REVIEW | 'Discourse Matters'

MAGNETIC GEOMETRY



DOLPHIN GALLERY

Jason Karolak's large-scale geometric grids on display at the Dolphin include "Untitled (P-1101)," above.

Shapes and color draw viewers to artists in the Dolphin's exhibit.

By DANA SELF
Special to the Star

A process-oriented painter is kind of like a method actor.

Both revel in the nitty-gritty, emotional, immersive and physical progression of getting to the final creation.

The nimble, process-oriented abstractions of New York painter Jason Karolak and soon-to-be-returning-to-New York artist Eric Sall fill the two main galleries of

the Dolphin, 1600 Liberty St.

Brooklyn-based Jason Karolak, who is having his first showing at the Dolphin, scrutinizes a repeating form of geometry in both large and diminutive formats.

In the large paintings, which are about 6 feet by 7 feet, Karolak creates a dark ground, sort of a spatial void, into and from which loosely painted geometric grids emerge.

In "Untitled (P-1013)," the form hovers toward the top of the inky matte background. The form's webbing gives it a basket-like effect, while a shadowy

ghost image both grounds the floating form and gives it a sense of history.

Karolak's devotion to the procession of these images over the course of their invention gives them metaphorical heft and an intriguing memory arc.

In "Untitled (P-1108)," the blobby, webbed image floats atop a shadowy form cradling other layered grids. Through these layers, Karolak conveys the viewer in and out of his spatial inquiry that emerges over time.

Small dots of bright paint on the matte background lure us back to the surface from the futuristic interior of the image.

A floating sensation invigorates Karolak's paintings, which may suggest the work of leading New York painter Terry Winthers. The pulsating blue, acid

fine arts



DOLPHIN GALLERY

Eric Sall's "Love Love Love" balances bright, horizontal swaths of color within a cheery vertical composition.

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green and purple forms, often reminiscent of wildly abstracted geodesic domes, float on the luminous dark blue-black backgrounds. The ghosted forms that underlie these loose geometrics suggest things have happened and reveal an organic sensation of transformation.

Kansas City Art Institute alumnus Eric Sall has unlimited imagery. His wildly inventive paintings are marked by unexpected color choices, surfaces that vary from thickly painted to thinly washed, and an endless exploration of abstraction's most pure impulses.

He varies his quirky, geometric forms from canvas to canvas, never settling on a consistently identifiable style, which, in a weaker painter, might seem flighty and inexperienced, but in Sall's work, it is a hallmark of his

the show

"Discourse Matters" continues at the Dolphin, 1600 Liberty St., through Aug. 6. Hours are 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; noon to 5 p.m. Saturday. For more information, call 816-842-4415 or visit www.thedolphin-gallery.com.

ingenuity.

In the pinkly optimistic "Love Love Love," Sall capitalizes on the canvas's two seams — which he sewed for visual impact — to emphasize the horizontal divisions in this vertical painting. Multiple colored rings soar across the seams, while each horizontal section has a separate, yet cohesive, personality. The entire painting, with its sunny yellow, vivid blues and that luminous pink, is in perfect equilibrium.

The moody "Durr dee Durr" balances the cheery "Love Love Love." Painted in thick layers on a dark ground, considerable action happens within the borders of the background. The red bull's-eyes in "Doodle Doo" are echoed in the large oval that attempts to contain them. Sall often floats his compositions within the boundaries of the canvas, suggesting a compositional affinity with Karolak's floating forms.

Sall's exploration of all the gestures, squeaks, drips, slashes, brushstrokes and infinite ways to pull the visual world apart tells how abstraction's multiple processes are at the heart of his work.

While the exhibition is advertised as a group show and includes Rachel Hayes, Shari Mendelson and Wilbur Niwald, these artists are consigned to other spaces rather than included in the gallery's two main exhibition spaces.

Unfortunately for these other artists, who would have been better served by a separate exhibition, the discourse that matters — borrowing from the exhibition's lofty title — is the visual conversation between Karolak and Sall, the two central and magnetic abstractionists at play.