

# Ralph Wickiser

WALTER WICKISER

This show, "The Reflected Stream: The Early Years 1975 - 1985," offered a beguiling look at landscape abstractionist Ralph Wickiser (1910-98). Wickiser's near-obsessive focus on reflected patterns of images in the brook near his Woodstock, New York, home and studio resulted in paintings that pulse with concentrated energy. At a distance, these idyllic scenes push and pull the eye between illusion and abstraction. In the haunting *Cow Tracks* (1980) light and shadow flicker on the water's surface, and a floating leaf provides a momentary rest for the eye, only to yield to reflected tree forms that are dematerialized by prismatic blotches of refracted lilac from indentations of cow hooves. All is metamorphosis. Layers of kaleidoscopic subtlety emerge. Although Wickiser used photographs as notes, the feel of his paintings is not of photorealism but of something organic evolving from the joyful application of pigment.



**Ralph Wickiser,  
*Yellow Reflections*,  
1983, 40" x 60"**

visual things and human thoughts. In the late paintings, Wickiser returns to a purer abstraction, flattening his opaque forms to obtain a simple lyricism, reminiscent of the early abstractionist Augustus Vincent Tack, who also turned mountains and clouds into sumptuous dramas of design.

*Yellow Reflections* (1983) is a tour de force of transformation and dazzle. What appears to be a stony streambed strewn with fall leaves dissolves and reconstitutes itself into a mosaic of gemlike lozenges and patches of pure abstraction. Emersonian metaphors abound in these works: there is an underlying belief in the radical correspondence between

**--David Cleveland**  
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