

Across Boundaries
an exhibition statement by Robert Costa

Dividing her time between painting and curating, **Gayle Ruskin** conceived “Across Boundaries” as a dialogue among artists whose work defy easy classification in style and procedure yet together affect an harmonious fusion. “My curatorial approach,” says Ruskin, “is similar to the way I compose my picture plane: by first confronting then resolving opposites like gestural painting and geometric shapes.” Her objective is to challenge the conventional thinking among scholastic curators who routinely evaluate art by generic categorizations such as minimalism, expressionism and Pop. By integrating these seemingly incongruous methodologies, the exhibition suggests a synthesis that draws divergent work together rather than pushing them further apart.

The five artists selected by Ruskin likewise skew the stylistic boundaries that often arbitrarily delineate art. **Bibi Calderaro**’s gold ink on black vellum drawing, *Entropic Low*, advances a conceptual agenda in the guise of an allover composition teetering between action painting and graffiti, though beholden to neither style. The image consists of a circle of jumbled lines drawn with magic marker around plastic liter bottles, laundry detergent jugs and other post-consumer throwaways. According to the Argentinean-born artist, her work employs entropy as the discarded containers and their composite contours each evolve toward their respective ground stated: the eventual sameness of decomposing detritus compared with the Pollockesque equilibrium of inextricable outlines.

David Goerk’s wall installation comprises an array of small, brightly colored minimalist sculptures arranged in sub groupings that compare and contrast their individual components. Each has its own quirky disposition and no two are alike. With proper spacing the assembly strikes a perfect balance between discrete units that can stand alone and elemental parts of a larger meta-artwork. Cross-associations spontaneously occur with each viewing.

Michael Rouillard’s untitled oil painting on sheet metal is at first glance a deceptively simple color-field composition without the color: all white save for a few tiny black dashed lines symmetrically ordered with draftsman-like precision; it hardly looks as if a human hand was involved in making it. But soon the diagrammatic coolness gives way to invisible brushstrokes that catch the ambient light, changing the tone of the work throughout the course of the day. Lines of

shadows along the joint and edges of the plates emerge, as do painted stripes under layers of white glaze. Suddenly the surface appears ethereal and boundless.

David Row focuses on the inherent duality of the ellipse as both a flat geometric form and the oblique projection of a circle in perspective. In his diptych, *Flatland*, Row juxtaposes the ellipse motif on adjoining panels. One panel has fragments of ellipses, roughly mottled and partially smeared into mud with the use of a squeegee; the other shows a pair of concentric ellipses sketchily drawn in paint and forming a giant O. Or is it a circular ring floating in ambiguous space? Visual perception conflicts with the concrete, and brushmanship butts heads with mechanical process.

John Zinsser's *Going Straight* is a high relief oil on enamel painting that takes impasto to a new dimension, one in which brushstrokes become literal objects jutting out from the canvas. With the pigment piled on as thick as cake icing, one would expect the application of color to be made with careful deliberation, yet the composition has the spontaneity of Abstract Expressionism with none of the melodrama. Instead, a knowing humor pervades this and many other works by this most original of painters; his allusions to classical abstraction are subtle and whimsical enough to avoid the heavy-handedness of academic Appropriation.

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