

arts wednesday

A world of shapes, angles, mystery

By Cate McQuaid
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Nancy White is not a showy painter. Her abstract works at Steven Zevitas Gallery, no larger than 10½ inches tall, sport a

GALLERIES

consistent color or value, which means there's little contrast of bright and dark — rather, this group of paintings is fervently dim.

That's part of what captivates. White doesn't romance the eye, but she draws the viewer into her small worlds of slicing shapes and tilting planes with compositions that suggest surprising space. Within the dusky tones, there may not be glamour, but there's mystery.

These works verge toward monochromatic, with "#35" shuffling oranges, and "#40" built from wine reds with the occasional sliver of green. White's color consistency evokes temperature, humidity, and the suggestion of stepping into a small, enclosed space with passages and obstructions that invite you to find your way by touch.

These are White's largest paintings to date, and she introduces curves amid all her straight edges. In "#44," which is all gray-blues and browns, the left side looks like a brown bracket, cupping a scoop of blue twilight — the deep space in this painting. The layered planes of gray and brown to the right might be a pyramid, opening at the front to spill an unlikely shadow.

The flat, opaque forms in these works build on one another to suggest volume, they scissor around each other like slotted pieces of construction paper, or they angle out as if crisply



JWWHITE/PHOCASSO

"#35" by Nancy White.



Left: Andreas Fischer's "It Seemed Downright Useful in Its Application." Right: Andy Moerlein's "Hanging by a Thread."



folded. The orange piece, "#35," features that last trick, as triangles pivot one into the next, making a zigzag in which one angle nests into the next. These fractured, complex spaces confound, but, in their delicacy, they draw you in.

White's powerfully understated paintings are effective because her formal rigor prompts the experience of night vision — groping through shadows, looking for edges — which makes you feel as if you can't see at all. But of course you can. It's just a different way of seeing.

Obscured vision

"Lake Effect/Nor'easter: Part II," a group show at LaMontagne Gallery, also takes up on the idea of obscured vision. The exhibit follows "Lake Effect/Nor'easter: Part I" staged at Andrew Rafacz Gallery in Chicago late last year, which spotlighted artists from LaMontagne's roster. For this show, three Rafacz painters were invited to reflect on winter weather.

Zachary Buchner's pieces, in which he coats his painted canvases with plaster, smartly evoke whiteout conditions, al-

NANCY WHITE: New Work
At: Steven Zevitas Gallery,
450 Harrison Ave., through
Jan. 26. 617-778-5265,
www.stevenzevitas
gallery.com

LAKE EFFECT/NOR'EASTER: Part II

At: LaMontagne Gallery,
555 East 2nd St.,
South Boston, through
Jan. 26. 617-464-4640,
www.lamontagne
gallery.com

HEIGHT, WIDTH, DEPTH, TIME: Boston Sculptors Celebrates 20 Years

At: Boston Sculptors
Gallery, 486 Harrison Ave.,
through Jan. 27.
617-482-7781,
www.bostonsculptors.com

Anniversary show

Boston Sculptors Gallery, founded in 1992, celebrates its 20th anniversary with a cleverly installed exhibition featuring its 36 current members and 15 alumni. The gallery started in a West Newton chapel, where members mounted ambitious installations that were up for several weeks at a time. In 2003, they moved to Harrison Avenue and changed the programming to two solo shows a month. The model seems to work for this for-profit artists' collective, which has done a mighty job promoting Boston sculpture.

The work comes across as varied and, on the whole, incisive and witty. Niho Kozuru's "Nova," a red rubber circle, serrated on the inside, blobby on the outside, combines the organic with the industrial. Nancy Milliken's "Honey Wall" is fairly simple — a translucent square case filled with honey, mounted on the wall — but it deliciously conflates structure with light and taste. Roz Driscoll's "Moult" features a ceiling-high ladder, and a strip of rawhide twines down it like the castoff skin of a snake. Dan Wills's "Nervous Reaction," a cartoon sculpture of a bolt shying from a voracious wrench, is a hoot.

I'm a sucker for sculptures that play against monumentality, such as Hannah Verlin's "Extinct," a cube of paper circles, each written over with the name of a species that has become extinct. Viewers are encouraged to take a circle with them. Then there's Andy Moerlein's "Hanging by a Thread," suspended over the gallery's front door: It looks like a boulder, but it hangs from a string; it's likely made of something much lighter than the rock it purports to be.

A fast-paced Pecha Kucha panel discussion, "Sculpture That Works With Audience: Kinetic, Interactive, Installation, and Public Art" is scheduled at Boston Sculptors Gallery for the evening of Jan. 23.

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