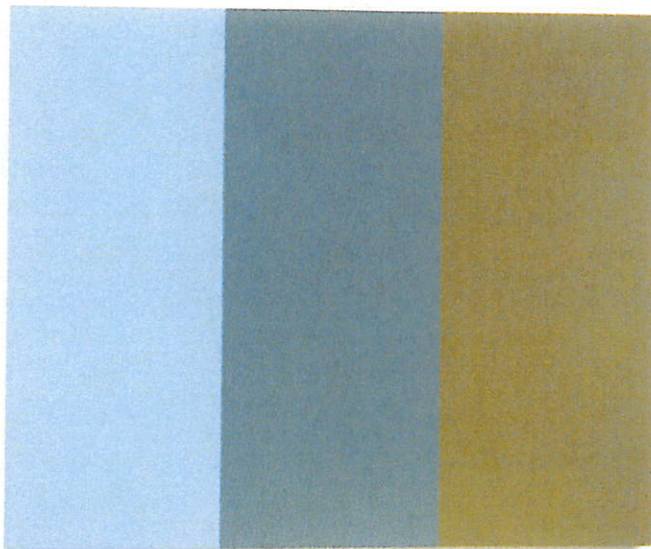


CULVER CITY

In *another country* [Susanne Veilmetter Los Angeles Projects; May 14—June 18, 2005], Los Angeles artist **Yunhee Min**'s latest suite of eight paintings titled after James Baldwin's novel of 1962, the artist plays with palette, contrast, and scale in shaped canvases built of dissonant vertical fields of acrylic rolled-on color and volatile geometries. Tying with both physical and optical effects, the artist's newest work is informed by her experience of the American South—influenced by what she calls "land-space." Her approach to perspectival and perceptual play derives from the visual and experiential effects of the open, boundless horizon she discovered in Texas during an artist's residency. Min's interest in translating the qualities of a dusky and still expanse prompted her to visualize distance in quiet, remote, yet potent paintings.

After seeing Olafur Eliasson's installation this summer at the Venice Biennale, I reconsidered Min's strategic destabilization of vision and visibility. In Eliasson's black void, a horizontal blue light wraps around the room at one's sight line. The artist challenges phenomenology and opticality, creating a horizon that is unapproachable and endless. The viewer is lost in the outlying light. This extreme experience of destabilization and alienation pointed to some of Min's concerns about the role and place of the viewer.

Min's brand of architectonic abstraction may be approached by way of her mediation of spatial estrangement. She aligns abstraction with procedures of construction as opposed to processes of reduction. From blackened violet hues to adobe red and clay brown tones, the artist develops her palette in an effort to both drain associative relationships and concurrently summon an associate atmosphere. Her complex relationship to representation and translation yields an elaborate viewing experience. Seduction and obstruction are both in play. An opacity lingers in Min's practice, below



Yunhee Min, *another country (all over)*, 2005, acrylic on canvas, 55 x 66 inches (courtesy of Suzanne Veilmetter Los Angeles Projects)

the surface of her paintings—a kind of secret or veiling of subjectivity that, present in her thinking and process, are not directly addressed in the topography of her flat, banded color fields.

When asked about her choice of literary referent and its bearing—or lack thereof—on the work, Min replies that "... one of the ways identity (specificity of a person) is manifested/practiced is by asserting subjectivity. And subjectivity is contextual, I think." Can her work be discussed as an increasingly motivated abstraction of identity? Assiduously engaging contemporary discourse on representation and identity construction in the visual field, might it bear the weight of articulating cultural specificity by adopting a strategy of indeterminacy?

Removed from traditional hermetic notions of abstraction, Min's lexicon borrows from John Rajchman and Julia Kristeva. She desires "a kind of pictorial, compositional instability ... a way of abstraction, foregrounding its material reality, paint and surface..." Her paintings are spatial, even sculptural. In the back room of the gallery, Min produced a small model of a series of sculptures that look like her paintings contracted and concretized. Determined by the contradiction of fixity and motion, the sculp-

tures are dynamic, pulsing, moving. They also point to her more monumental architectural site-specific interventions. Min describes the relationship between her sculptural, architectural, and painterly endeavors as discrete practices that structurally deny a centrality—"one is always pointing to the other."

—Lauri Firstenberg

LOS ANGELES

Walking through *Thing: New Sculpture from Los Angeles* [February 6—June 5, 2005], the Hammer Museum's coyly titled recent *tour de force* exhibition, I was faced with an almost delirious sense of modernist apathy. Stunning originality, fierce idiosyncrasy, maverick sensibilities and the uncompromising aesthetic determination of a Lee Bontecou, an Eva Hesse, or a Louise Bourgeois were nowhere to be found.

Newness should be an inclusive concept, encompassing a whole range of ideas and provocations. An exhibition of twenty artists currently working in Los Angeles, *Thing* is strangely, and sadly, stilted. Newness here seems to only refer to age, and I could not help but marvel at the number of participating artists who were under thirty. Los Angeles' obsession with youth culture now extends well into the art world. As a result, the work of many truly wonderful, indeed amazing, L.A. artists was not represented in *Thing*. More problematically, however, this well-groomed (despite some artists' efforts to appear rebellious, if only in process) and well-attended show takes no risks.



Matt Johnson, *Breadface*, 2004, cast plastic and oil paint (courtesy of the artist and Taxter & Spengemann, New York; photo: Joshua White)