

the almost Rymanesque color scheme, Colombet's statement remains complex. She is at her best when she straddles abstraction and natural reference, working from a minimalist concept but refusing to paint a purely abstract painting. —Jonathan Goodman

Cora Cohen at Jason McCoy

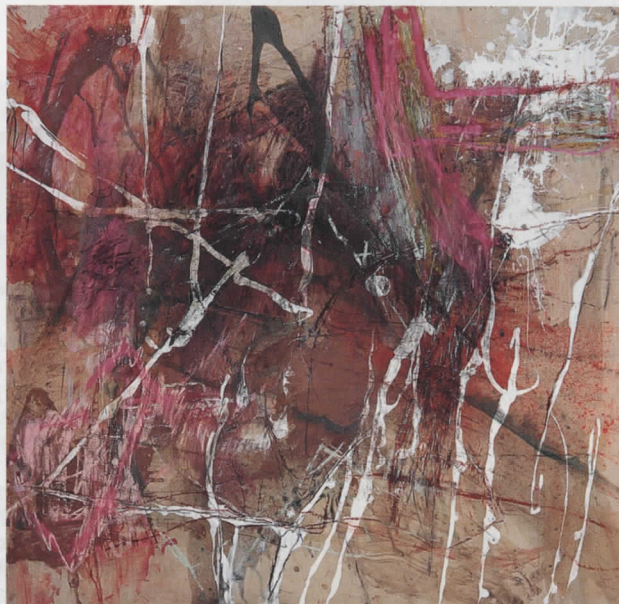
Of the formerly avant-garde practice of gestural abstraction, Cora Cohen is a prominent defender of the faith, and these eight paintings from 2004 might convince any doubters of its continued viability. The artist's tenacity and fearlessness are palpable. She avails herself of acrylics, charcoal, copper, oil pastel, powdered pigment, flashe and graphite in applications too unmannered to be called autographic. Largely devoid of the suggestion of landscape space that so often encumbers paintings of this sort, her works instead bring to mind atmospheric disturbances or occurrences undersea, where the effects of gravity are altered. Despite the judicious use of a few strong hues, in the end the work is more about surface and touch than color.

The storm of mark-making in *Things Belong to Her and She Belongs to Other Things* (46 by 48 inches) is anchored by an open linear structure of poured white acrylic ribs or struts, which supports the relentless rubbing and smearing although partly submerged in it. The spatial key is along the top edge, where a hot pink smear pops forward just to the right of a dark, backward-hurling vortex. There is breathing room around the edges of the

painting, where the neutral gray of the muslin Cohen favors is allowed to show and produces a vignette effect.

A central massing of dark also organizes *Another Order of Being* (38 by 48 inches), wherein a restless cloud of warm browns and cool blacks, shot through with alizarin glaze like cherry syrup, acts as a foil for exploratory slashes of pastel in electric blue, red and pale green. The goopy surface is pocked with craters where bubbles burst. Cohen is good at not tidying up. Caked oil pastel pulled across the crinkled furrows of slick acrylic glazes in *The Periphery* (29 by 46 inches) is wincingly ugly, but in keeping it the artist insists that the imperative of improvisational freedom is greater than the niceties of technique, or taste.

In the larger paintings, each nearly 6 feet square, Cohen paints without the safety net of the vignette structure and thus de-emphasizes the importance of the paintings' edges. *Heart of Darkness* sports Turneresque torrents of impasto suffused with the chromatic valence of red and green, but the values remain quite close. *Complicity and Resistance* pushes further still into formlessness with a clotted field of copper stains in a whitish mist. Pentimento is not a feature of the painting, it is its method. The extremely complex surface is a matrix of reversed pictorial decisions. Part of an awkward purple scrape is allowed to remain; jaundiced patches are left from an earlier notion of yellow. The urgency that propels the other paintings is here replaced by deliberation upon the Action painter's problem of knowing when to stop. —Stephen Maine



Cora Cohen: *Things Belong to Her and She Belongs to Other Things*, 2004, acrylic, charcoal, copper, pastel, oil pastel and pigment on muslin, 46 by 48 inches; at Jason McCoy.

Santi Moix at Paul Kasmin

Fledgling authors are often taught that perfectionism—not error—is the enemy of great writing; only through fearless means can they arrive at a noteworthy final draft. Transpose this concept to painting, and it's clear why many artists find inspiration in Santi Moix. He's one of those rare people in midcareer for whom risk—along with an intense love of process—is the better part of rigor.

Nowhere was this clearer than in the whopping 54 canvases included in Moix's solo show. Most bore the artist's signature formal elements: cerulean blue skies, clay-toned masses of land and an autographic, often amusing, array of biomorphic forms. True, Moix has worked within this vocabulary for a decade. Yet he restlessly searches for surprising ways to make every element—be

back, as tiny as a scholar in a Chinese landscape. Even as he boldly pierces that seemingly impenetrable sky, he looks ill-prepared for the precarious terrain on which he rests.

The fact that Moix has perfected a basic abstract structure has freed him up to become a better painter overall, even if a few of the pieces felt overworked. *Madremanya* (2002-04), for instance, boasts an ambitiously complex composition that manages to hold together, though it feels too dense and tense for comfort. In the small-scale *Upstate* (2003-04), a single, well-placed wash of white redeems a murky surface.

The artist also included 13 plaster sculptures in the show. As their whimsically anthropomorphic stalk-and-podlike forms paraded, single-file, down the center of the gallery, they seemed like purified elements