

engages in the complexity of the broken-up pattern. Elsewhere, the phenomenon of perspectival recession is given center stage. In *Untitled (Waterworks)*, the retaining walls of a narrow canal remain distinct as they extend into an unusually deep space.

These photo/drawings do not correspond to Miss's actual constructed projects. Pictorially, they are more complete and resolved than her built work appears in photos. Of course, that is not an accident. Miss intends her outdoor environments to be intimate, best experienced firsthand. The collages, by contrast, foster experimentation and present ideas that often lead to physically untenable, imaginary spaces, reiterating on paper her goal of establishing a relationship among viewer, space and object by intervening in the viewer's expectations.

—Cathy Lebowitz

Raoul De Keyser at David Zwirner

Among the problems dealers set for themselves and their artists

when they opt for an enormous space is that they have to fill it. Not every artist is able to do that, every time out, with first-rate work from a couple of years' production. Little-known in the U.S., the veteran Belgian painter Raoul De Keyser is familiar to Europeans, having enjoyed a retrospective at London's Whitechapel Gallery in 2004. Spanning four decades, the work in that show was consistently interesting, and often superb. But this exhibition, of 29 largely abstract paintings of 2006, most of them small, reticent and unlabored, suffered from lack of editing. The painter's hit-or-miss approach has yielded a few gems, but much unremarkable work was included. A more streamlined selection would have represented this accomplished artist to far better effect.

A small corridor space, which the gallery identifies as its "throughway," illustrates this conundrum by being an exception: here, a few well-chosen paintings looked fine. *Still* and *Trap*, two lovely, smallish canvases, flanked a polished stainless-steel stele by John McCracken



Raoul De Keyser: *Steek 2*, 1987/2005, oil on canvas, 34¾ by 27⅞ inches; at David Zwirner.

held over from that artist's exhibition. The sculpture's self-effacing, mirrored surfaces were in perfect emotional harmony with the paintings' washed-out, silvery palette. Of late, De Keyser's method has been to deploy across his surfaces a number of enigmatic shapes, from blandly lumpen to spiky and complex. It is unclear whether these are derived from visual experience or wholly invented; they are usually sketched out and filled in with little sense of their sources or development. In an intimate setting such willful slightness can be winning. In the big white cubes that are Zwirner's main spaces, it looked thin.

A painting need not be large, or loud, to hold its own against an expanse of white wall. In a small untitled painting, a bleary, brushy, bluish-gray cloud hovers on a neutral ground, as dimly seen as shrubbery through a dense fog, with an inexplicable but essential hyphenlike mark at top center. Like many of these canvases, this one is roughly fitted to its frame, with conspicuously imperfect corners and misaligned pencil guidelines. In another, a warm buff ground suffused with peach surrounds bunched and jagged shapes in grays and muted greens. But two hokey, colorful landscapes look out of place here. While De Keyser's method is understatement and lack of finish, a few charcoal-heavy paintings, such as *Wait*—at over 4

feet tall, among the show's largest—look barely begun. Smaller, schematic charcoal-and-oil paintings linger in memory as a group, but not individually.

Also on hand was evidence of the artist's occasional practice of altering old canvases. Dated 1987/2005, *Steek 1* and *Steek 2* are restretched sections cut from *Steek*, which, reproduced in the artist's catalogue raisonné of 2000, was evidently considered finished until sometime last year. Of course De Keyser retains the moral right to his own work, but the viewer is impressed with the decisiveness behind this radical, irreversible act. In fact, questions about

the nature of decision-making underlie the show, beginning with the dubious choice of subjecting these programmatically modest paintings to circumstances best suited to spectacle.

—Stephen Maine

David Row at Von Lintel

The nine luminous new paintings (all from 2006) in this show by David Row, a much respected New York-based abstract painter, have shifted from the analytic approach he previously favored to a more immediate engagement with the expressive, even lyrical qualities of paint and process. In the 1980s and 1990s, in an effort to revitalize nonrepresentational painting, he, as well as several other artists—Stephen Ellis, Valerie Jaudon, David Reed and Shirley Kaneda, to name a few—focused on the formal language of painting to create what was sometimes referred to as syntactical or conceptual abstraction.

Now it seems that Row has come full circle. His signature paintings of alkyd and oil with their calculated technical devices—the scraping, the sanding, the paired canvases—and bold, handsome shapes and colors, have given way to works in oil that seem more integrally the result of his painting process. They are scaled to the body, averaging around 5 by 6 feet, and are surprisingly lovely. I say surprisingly because reproduc-