

View of Robert Swain's "Visual Sensations," showing two acrylic-on-canvas paintings, made between 1992 and 2001; at the Hunter College Times Square Gallery.



example, the bride's profile is demarcated by an area of white on the yellow ground, but the red lines that trace her contours follow their own route, only roughly faithful to the white.

Wylie's work follows a faux-naïf strain in English art history (Alfred Wallis, Ken Kiff and Ben Nicholson come to mind). In Wylie's case, the departure from realism is great enough that the things depicted are present to us largely in our own remembering of them (almost as if they were written out instead of drawn in). Meanwhile, the paint is laid on with tremendous physicality. We can see where the brush ran out of paint, where the entire contents of a large tube, blended to a juicy consistency, have been globbed on to cover several square feet of canvas. This discrepancy, between the distantly remembered subject and the intensely present material, gives her paintings a thorny toughness.

It is encouraging that Wylie, who was born in 1934 and received her MA from the Royal College of Art in 1981, is receiving attention in New York. Her paintings have a hard-won idiosyncrasy and convey the seductive sense of not giving a damn what anyone else thinks.

—Julian Kreimer

ROBERT SWAIN HUNTER COLLEGE TIMES SQUARE GALLERY AND MINUS SPACE

For over four decades, Robert Swain has used painting to examine color as a phenomenological experience.

Providing a thrilling, exhausting workout for the viewer's rods and cones, "Visual Sensations: The Paintings of Robert Swain 1967-2010" at Hunter College, curated by Gabriele Evertz, surveyed the artist's work to date. Having long studied the role that context plays in color perception, Swain makes grid-based paintings in which each square is given its own color, forming columns and rows that chart transitions between hues, values and levels of saturation. *Untitled 915* (1979, 9 feet square; all works acrylic on canvas) resembles a color chart beset by daydreams. Meandering chromatic sequences create visual hiccups: a moody violet and a jaunty melon square interrupt the flow, gently discordant with the hues around them.

Untitled 8x8-5A RO #3 (1999-2001, 8 feet square) exemplifies another favored format of the artist's, in which each quadrant has a distinct identity. In complementary hues of red-violet and yellow-green, the upper- and lower-right squares of this work seem to alternately glow and turn gray in a battle of after-images. Each of the left-hand squares is itself a grid. Above, a delicately balanced quartet of analogous hues (an orange, two red-oranges and a violet-red) simultaneously reinforce and appear dissonant with one another; below, 16 squares articulate Albers-like transparencies, where the deepening of hues implies overlapping planes. Like an act in an opera, each of the four sections is a small drama in itself, with an internal logic, while also being an inextricable part of the whole.

Swain abruptly retooled in 2006, when he began painting with cheap sponge brushes. In his recent work, each mark is made in a single, opaque color, and has crisp edges and a distinct tactility. Pitting two or three colors against one another, each composition features overlapping marks that are relatively large along the top or at one upper corner, and gradually diminish, becoming dashes, then dots at the bottom. *Untitled 11/25/7 x 21/25/6 x 25/25/6* (2010, 7 by 14 feet) is painted in magenta, teal and green, of equal saturation and nearly equal value. Along the top and side edges, where the marks are the size and shape of sausages, the green is the most visually assertive, while the magenta comes to dominate the cluster of fingertip-sized marks at the bottom center.

A second exhibition at the Brooklyn gallery Minus Space, titled "Robert Swain: Primary Research," divulged the painter's meticulous methods and the system by which he has catalogued nearly 5,000 colors. *30-Part Circle* (1971, 24 inches in diameter) divides the spectrum into 30 colors, all of which Swain considers to be primaries. Also on view were charts expanding on 10 of those 30, each expressing dozens of declensions in value and saturation; the 64-square grid and color chips that Swain used to design his compositions before computerizing the process; and digital printouts of a half-dozen two-color studies and the resultant 12-inch-square canvases. Balancing objectivity and subjectivity, analysis and intuition, Swain humanizes the effort to quantify the rainbow.

—Stephen Maine