

ART IN AMERICA October 2003

On canvas after canvas, her powerful red forms are shaded, here and there, with strokes of black that lend drama and intensity through contrast of hue. The paintings, expansive in scale, tend to feature vortexes that spill forcefully out and away from or back toward the center. The changes rung on this basic gestalt make for interesting variations on a theme.

The artist emphasizes dense physicality on her canvases and translucence and volume in her works on paper. In *Red Series: RSC/01* (2001), a large oil on canvas, we see a roughly triangular formation pointing downward. The thick brushstrokes are nearly smeared onto the canvas. In *Red Series: RSC/10* (2002), strokes of color curve in on each other, creating a knot in the bottom left of the painting. The white of the rest of the canvas acts as a void surrounding the explosive moment. In the oils on paper, *Red Series: RSP/03* and *Red Series: RSP/04*, for example, the luminous strokes seem lit from behind. Machado conveys pleasure in paint's ability to record pure motion. Engrossed in the luxuries of her materials, she communicates raw feeling with something close to joy.

—Jonathan Goodman



Suzan Dionne: *Halo III*, 2002, oil on canvas, 18 by 23 inches; at ROME Arts.

Margaret Neill at Metaphor

Having explored the possibilities of looping, gestural mark-making in her earlier work, Margaret Neill now examines line by focusing on the edges of forms. In so doing, she comes to grips with color in a big way. Her beautiful and ingenious new paintings employ the deceptively simple compositional device of overlap-

ping ovals. Modest in scale, varied in size and usually horizontal or vertical in orientation, these blunt shapes float within an enveloping volume of pictorial space as if attempting to settle themselves. The negative shapes that result—multiple concavities as baroquely complex as the engendering ovals are rudimentary—echo with revised color choices and adjusted contours. The work's abundant humor results from the surprise of apparently casual construction rendered to very precise effect.

The boxy, off-square canvases range in size from 17 inches to 6 feet high. With few exceptions, Neill's ovals overlap the edges of the picture plane as well, as in *Dash* (26 by 29 inches; all works 2003, oil on linen), where several loil about the periphery as if reluctant to get too involved. In smaller paintings like *Wrangle* (14 by 16 inches), surface work is vigorous and pentimenti are evident. She often employs a scraping treatment that qualifies color by allowing the underlying areas to bleed through. The out-of-register edges of the dominant shape in *Pick Up* (30 by 36 inches) reveal that a pungent purple has been knocked back, made to behave, by an earthen greenish membrane that has the added effect of activating the lipstick salmon to its left and the hot pink to its right.

The viewer's attention repeatedly returns to the paintings' facture, which is always on display but never showy. Something in the way Neill's areas of rich color cozy up to one another recalls the paintings of Ray Parker, although hers are not haptic. Her works suggest circumscribed views of panoramic vistas, as if she has looked hard at early Renaissance masters like Uccello and Piero, with their overlapping helmets and halos defining a shallow space behind which a deeper space may be glimpsed.

A consistent chromatic retreat in the very largest canvases is curious. At 4½ by 6 feet, *Breezeway* is more ambitious in scale but lacks the aggressive, jumpy color chords that help to give the smaller paintings (and, even more, the gouaches) their optical kick. Possibly



Gabriela Machado: *Red Series: RSC/10*, 2002, oil on canvas, 77½ by 90½ inches; at Neuhoff.

Neill's intent is that the bigger paintings should embody a cooler emotional temperature. Still, we are left to imagine where this accomplished painter could take us if she opened up the throttle a bit more.

—Stephen Maine

Ingo Meller and Otto Zitko at Cheim and Read

Ingo Meller studied in Germany with Eduardo Paolozzi and Daniel Spoerri. His art education was centered on sculpture and the legacy of Marcel Duchamp. After graduating in the early 1980s, he received a grant from the German government and used it, oddly enough, to study old-master paintings firsthand. He traveled throughout Europe and the United States, visiting all the major museums. In a recent

conversation, Meller told me that he tried to pay attention to how the paint looked in and of itself, independently of the image that it created.

His ensuing career has been as an abstract painter with a decidedly clinical approach. Meller paints on pieces of unstretched canvas a bit smaller in size than standard pillowcases. The material is cut in a slightly skewed vertical trapezoid. The pieces of fabric are primed with transparent acrylic medium so that the natural color of the linen is visible between Meller's brushstrokes. In the gallery, the paintings are affixed directly to the wall with Velcro tabs.

Meller generally uses three or more colors and different brands of oil paint in each work (the brand and color names are cited

Margaret Neill: *Dash*, 2003, oil on linen, 26 by 29 inches; at Metaphor.

