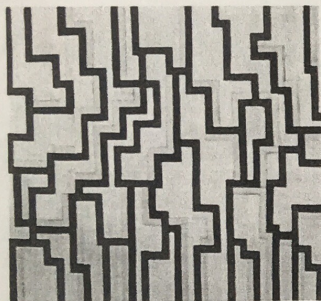


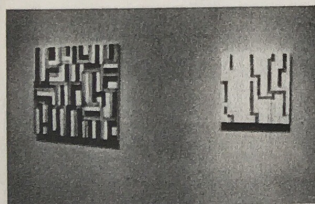
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as to which is which. In *Shift to Blue*, for example, that relationship is far more ambiguous than it is in piece like *Blue Surround* where the red linear forms definitely come forward. This is all the more reinforced by the lighter blue on blue forms that edge up against the red ones like visual alter-egos.

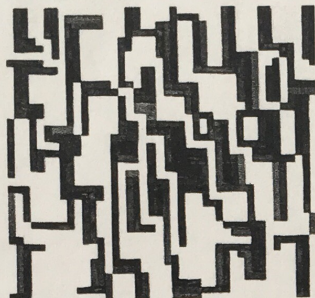


Gudrun Mertes-Frady, *Blue Surround*, 2003, 68 x 72 in

Even as the content remains consistent throughout Mertes-Frady's art the subject matter of the new paintings suggests something abstractly systematic. In other words, order is related to the uniform confines of the grid but nevertheless contains its own sense of logic. This is a new factor not present in the earlier paintings. These pieces also bring two other artists to mind, particularly as to subject matter. The first is Peter Busa and his Indian Space paintings (his exhibition at David Findlay Jr. last January was reviewed here). The second is the quilt work of Rosie Lee Tompkins an African-American quilt maker who last year had a solo exhibition at the



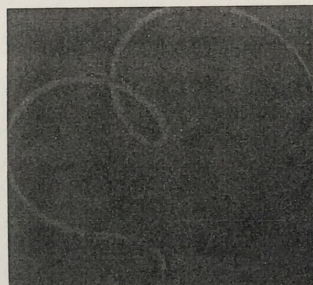
Gudrun Mertes-Frady (installation view)



Gudrun Mertes-Frady, *Shift to Blue*, 2003, 60 x 63 in

Peter Blum gallery (reviewed here in November 2002). It is the starkness of the repeated, though not duplicated forms, that brings about the comparison.

Susan English, *The Painting Center*
 52 Greene Street to September 27th
 ([Click here to see a movie clip](#)).



Susan English, *Mirre*, 2003, oil on canvas, 22 x 24 in

This sweet little show, in the back gallery of the Painting Center is reductive, sensuous and gestural all at the same time. At first glance the color appears to be uniform within each piece: there is the yellow one, the red one, the gray one, etc. But a closer look reveals how the color is carefully and subtly constructed; it's like looking into rich deep pools or environments of color. This segues right into their sensuous qualities

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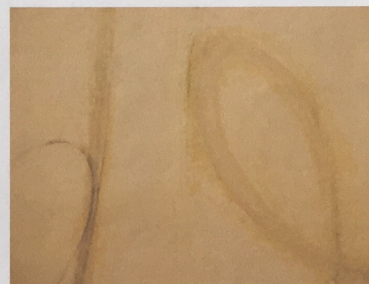
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beginning with the color but also in the understated paint handling as well as the gentle curves of the forms.

Look at the detail of *Conversation* to see how the forms are set within the ground. Gesture is reserved for the linear elements which loop and otherwise pirouette across the picture plane in arabesques of painted and graphite lines. In short, English sets up a stage with her color and depth of background and dramatically dances her forms across it.



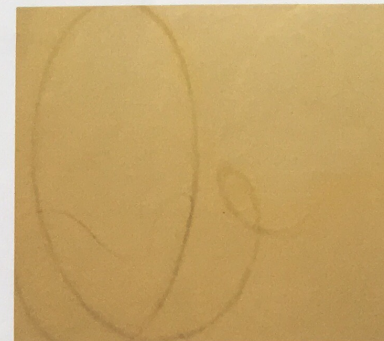
Susan English, *Conversation* (detail)

A counterpoint to the paintings, at least in terms of approach and materials, is several smaller pieces that combine watercolor and graphite on paper. Here the color finds wider range and a less ambiguous, though greater, depth of space is established. The looped forms float to the front of the picture plane to retain focus while the background is made up of blurred imagery that vary in color. The feel is very different from the paintings as the artist allows more contrast and variety of color in. Additionally these pieces are far more transparent as compared to the more opaque handling of the paintings. Also included are two small graphite pieces on paper in which straight-forward gesture is the focal point.

English's art and its content is much very concerned with spatial relationships as the forms move in, out, and across the picture plan. On one hand the work is completely abstract; there is no recognizable imagery here. On the other, it engages similar territory as representational painting in deceiving the eye as regards depth of space. The difference is that, in the absence of a

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Susan English, *Conversation*, 2003, oil on canvas, 40 x 44 in

narrative it is pure spatial depth itself that receives the emphasis. At the same time her art is much like an expression of animated, visual music passing through the spaces she creates. This is much in the vein of Serena Bocchino's art in which graphite is also incorporated into paintings and works on paper.



Susan English, *Red Loop*, 2003, watercolor and graphite on paper, 11.5 x 12 in

The show is nicely presented and the work is sized well to the rather cramped gallery space (see the movie clip for a comprehensive view of the show). Even so, the paintings do edge up closely to serialization. The similarity of their proportions, paint handling and the repetition of the lopped

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