

## VISUAL JAZZ

Clichés become clichés because they're true.

BY JOHN PHOTOS

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I need to confess something: I don't usually go for abstract painting. In the course of history, the rejection of illusionism (the attempt to make a painted object appear real) seems important but, at some point between Yves Klein and Robert Ryman, it feels like the ship bot-tomed out. Maybe the impulse toward abstraction comes down to a simple division along dominant brain hemispheres. All I know is, if I'm not careful, I end up in conversations about irreducibility and flatness, which are really just fancy ways to describe wallpaper.

Still, I admire the plucky optimism of abstract painters. Inherent in their actions is the belief that art for art's sake is relevant—that in the absence of social or political themes, a purity of form (beauty!) is possible. And they're right.

David Solomon's paintings at Jay Etkin Gallery sustain a nice blend of vibrant color and form that is enjoyable as much for the quasi-imagery as for the variegated marks he employs to create it.

Relating abstract painting to jazz music is a cliché for sure, but I couldn't help think of how apt the comparison is here. Like instrumental music, Solomon's compositions exist in the nonverbal realm of consciousness.

The titles ("Sullypuss," "Some Other Fruit," "In Person") also have a parallel in jazz—they provide a whimsical way to distinguish the works without prescribing a meaning. This is preferable since the fun of Solomon's images is the use of myriad nameless forms.

Even so, many of the works appear almost figurative; the forms represent as yet undiscovered microbial life. A typical composition contains several large shapes that conjugate on a flattened field as one peers down at them, as if through a microscope.

Solomon uses recurring characters—flattened half-moons striated like cartoon bananas, eyeballs and what look like silhouettes of heads make regular appearances—but I never get the sense he's trying to communicate anything too concrete. Rather, his works feel spontaneous and performative. His experimentation with the application and viscosity of paint is of great interest. There is an

unbound playfulness from image to image. Solomon's surfaces are surprisingly complex, a fact that isn't terribly obvious from across the room. Often a shape is revealed to have a pattern of small repetitive marks that just isn't visible at first. Other works combine differing painting styles, moving from solid linear marks and clearly defined shapes to brushy blobs that bleed and ooze outwards.

Solomon's marks are lively and never appear overworked. On the contrary, some of them seem like they could have used a bit more attention. This too relates to the one-off approach of a live recording, in which the musicians have only one collective take to play their parts. As is the nature of improvisation—nimble, clumsy, restrained or emotive—whatever happens, happens, and the results are permanently fused that way forever.

Solomon further tweaks the tension between past and present by rotating his canvases after he works on them, evidenced by the runny drips that travel toward the upper edge or the left-hand side of the painting, defying gravity. This, more than anything, demonstrates

DAVID SOLOMON, "THE KEEPER"



Don't ask questions—just enjoy it.

Solomon's penchant for improvisation.

Solomon writes in his artist statement, "I work intuitively, starting with an idea roughed out in drawing or my mind, which is quickly discarded for the true life of the painting." Replace the word "painting" with "melody" and he might as well be a session soloist speaking about the act of recording.

I am especially taken with the background of a small work in which yellow, pink and white are used. The colors dart and weave between one another to create a motley beige tone that couldn't have been planned. In these marks I find the perfect example of abstraction's strength—it just feels right.

ALL REVEALED,  
THE  
DISSEMINATION  
OF KNOWLEDGE

Through April 24

Jay Etkin Gallery  
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la Familia,  
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