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Marlena Donohue
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After some years of artistic angst, we are hearing the stirrings of a rekindled interest in rectilinear forms, in the utopian clarity of strict geometric abstraction, and (according to the rhetoric that typically accompanies this mode) in a kind of "pure" painting unencumbered by the extraneous content of narrative, subject matter and imitation of the real world.

If this is starting to sound like a little Malevich, a little Mondrian and a dash of Reinhardt, that is because the new "clear" painting is not so new but linked to the entire aesthetic of imageless art.

The seven artists in "Divisions," on view at the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art through Jan. 26, share a strict and stark geometric vocabulary of square and rectangular fields of color. Alan Wayne shows multi-paneled works composed of a series of joined vertical rectangles. Their well-controlled monochromatic black surfaces bind physical divisions into one perceptual gestalt.

More resolved than earlier works, Penelope Krebs' paintings still stay too close to a Mondrian palette and format to make a convincing statement. Edith Baumann-Hudson shows elongated vertical rectangles with deftly modulated monochromatic surfaces contained and concretized by small horizontal bands at top and bottom. Jeff Felgraf paints adjacent rectangles of black/gold or black/red, with pigment seeming to seep into or become contiguous with picture plane via long, thinly applied horizontal strokes.

In the most obvious departure from the flatness credo, Richard LaFleur joins physically separate rectangles under one unified surface of thick uniform ridges in lush blacks and reds. Lemon yellow painted panels counterbalanced by symmetrical orange and red horizontal bands mark Jerald Brainin's pieces.

Finally, Scott Heywood departs from the right angle axis, rotating shapes to eliminate even remote associations with architecture. The black and white squares and rectangles form puzzle-piece shaped canvases that are more analytic than their '60s cousins and pit precarious balancing points against elaborate proportional relations.

A "what else is new" reaction to "Divisions" indicates that geometric abstraction today-filtered as it is through decades of rigorously resolved geometric conclusions by modern masters-must be especially keen itself if it is to avoid the flavor of rehashed hash.