



ARTS DeLap paintings touched by magic

By Anita Katz on February 5, 2015 12:00 am

Tony DeLap creates abstract art that reflects a search for beauty while also messing playfully with the eye. Known for pioneer contributions to minimalism and op art in the 1960s, DeLap demonstrates his connection to those movements in a show on view through March 14 at Rena Bransten Projects in The City.

The exhibition contains 11 paintings and mixed-media pieces by the artist, who often shifts between painting and sculpture in a single work. Geometric shapes, land and sea colors (browns, blacks, greens, blues), precise design and illusionist visual dynamics characterize his art.

Gallery owner Bransten describes DeLap as a vital, significant presence with a distinctive creative style: “He is still making art, and he is very well respected,” she says, of the 1927-born DeLap.

Referring to another DeLap skill – performing card tricks and other sleight-of-hand maneuvers – she says, “His paintings have a little bit of magic.” Raised in the Bay Area, DeLap relocated to Los Angeles in 1965, and became an early force in the minimalism movement, also the terrain of Sol LeWitt, Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd.

His art involves stripping a project down to basic forms, such as squares and triangles, with a quest for beauty and truth helping to drive the process. His materials include paint, canvas, linen, wood and aluminum.

Also a player in the optical-art movement of the day, DeLap is also interested in how artistic techniques can bend visual perception. Two-dimensional forms appear active and three-dimensional in his meticulously crafted abstractions.

In “Card Trick” (42 by 42 inches, acrylic on linen, 2014), a brown square and a black square, connected by a white strip and aided slyly by the blue and green background, become 3D forms. Look at it one way, and the black shape upstages the brown. Look again, and the brown shape claims the foreground.

In the slightly smaller “Ibis” and “Reo” (acrylic on linen, 2014), black and tan forms create back-and-forth dynamics. Presented as a diptych, these similarly born but differently detailed gallery-wall fraternal twins play off each other.

Earlier pieces include “Bluey-bluey” (1992), a large wood and acrylic construction featuring some graceful triangular action, and “Handy Bandy” (1999), a painting-sculpture with curves.

DeLap is also the focus of “Tony DeLap: A Unique Perspective” a film by Dale Schierholt screening at 7 p.m. today at the San Francisco Art Institute. Visit www.sfai.edu for details.