

DAVID SOLOMON: ALL REVEALED

JAY ETKIN GALLERY

703 CAMINO DE LA FAMILIA #3103, SANTA FE

Take some of Raymond Jonson's Transcendentalism, think about Wassily Kandinsky's early-twentieth-century volume *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, throw in reverse-glass painting techniques, and look at a lot of early- to mid-century abstraction—especially Klee and Dubuffet—and you've got yourself a sense of what David Solomon is working with in his recent series of oil paintings on aluminum panels.

Solomon wades into a tough arena that requires some time and intellectual discipline from its viewers. His work is not founded on graphic design, obsessive mark-making, or graffiti- and illustration-based art, which are all very popular—for many good reasons—these days. Solomon's paintings are difficult because they are so redolent of Modernism and so darned flat that they seem somehow armor clad. But this is work that's worth spending time with. The artist's forte is the depiction of space without defining it. As he puts it (more or less), he likes to suggest dimensionality without showing it, thus enticing the viewer to engage. Once the vocabulary of lyrical abstraction and symbolism emerges, the playfulness of the forms becomes clearer, while their significance deepens. They move, driven by the music of the spheres. Despite the geometry that is so much a part of Solomon's language, he gives us a lot of biomorphic shapes and colors that suggest his native Southern Florida and its bizarre tropical fecundity. Seeds the size of fists float across the field, ready for pollination. An open eyeball speaks to us, via synesthesia, from the All-Seeing One. These forms float—on water, on air, on consciousness, on the sheer flatness of the aluminum panels. Out of that flatness, the mind, given enough time, begins to figure out relationships, and meaning shifts and grows. Oh yes, there's a message here, and it's up to each of us to figure it out.

One of the drawbacks of working on glass-like surfaces is that it's very difficult to paint freely on the slick surface that insists on repelling liquids. It's far easier to muddy up the pigment, and Solomon's work evidences this in places. However, for the most part he controls his medium well, making defined marks and painting into them with a firm hand. The outlining, dashes, and cross-hatching reveal his years of immersion in comic-book illustrations. Despite the temptations of drawing, Solomon generally paints intuitively, letting go of the super-ego and allowing the paintings to do what they want to do.

Also in the exhibition was a grouping of small paintings, more directly gratifying as details than their larger counterparts. *Portrait Impressionism* is a little gem of color and form, while *Drifter* is a miniature organic blobby thing, yellow and spotted, and immediately likeable. The series of black-and-white drawings and washes on paper was also striking. The paper was forgivingly porous, even friendly after all the panels. But check out those other paintings; they're more reserved, but they've got their brilliant points. As they say, still waters run deep.

—KATHRYN M DAVIS



David Solomon, *Undersea Eyelash*, oil on aluminum composite, 24" x 30", 2010