



Looking Forward, 2007, Mixed media on canvas, 96 x 144 in.

Dizzy Superheros

Abstract painter Nobu Fukui's symphony of circles

BY MICHAEL TYSON MURPHY

Looking through a kaleidoscope, it's easy to forget that part of the vitality of the tumbling and realigning image is that it incorporates fragments of the visual reality right in front of us cheek-by-jowl with shape-shifting shards of pure color and light. Now imagine this dazzling world as a symphony of circles, and the reality in front of us transformed into comic-book cameos, and you've stepped into the lusciously intriguing new works of painter Nobu Fukui, on view at the Stephen Haller Gallery.

Looking Forward (2007) is the central and most inclusive image of the show, registering as both a psychic demographic map and the rich universe out of which the other works are culled. The smaller pieces convey a startling jeweled intensity through

close-keyed or complementary coloring. All of the paintings follow the same syntax:

The dominant visual layer is a dense scattering of different-sized circles of flat acrylic or oil paint and occasional reflective mylar in seemingly random distribution. Wedged in between, comic-book cutouts force us to try to make narrative sense out of a jumbled assortment of superheroes.

On top of all this, in calculating counterpoint, an airy distribution but unforgiving grid of the softest sumi calligraphy ink suddenly reconfigures the entire image into a game board, complete with 3-D varicolored beads lined up in roaming groups. The eye darts from bright red to pale orange, from full-scale Wonder Woman to newspaper fine print, never resting. The balance is palpably taut, like the instant between the end of a musical interlude and its final vibration, or the next move in a game of skill and chance.

June 21, 2007