

RONNIE LANDFIELD & PETER REGINATO: COLOR CODED

BY ERIC GELBER



Ronnie Landfield, *Angels in the Morning* 2002, Acrylic on canvas, 55 x 108 inches

These artists have known each other for over thirty years. The exhibition is a combination of intensely colored paintings and sculptures that embody different world views. Ronnie Landfield attempts to transcend the material world by avoiding representation while Peter Reginato celebrates an abstract materialism. The title of the exhibition, "Color Coded", is a pretentious way of saying, "The artwork is colorful!" This reduces the art to interior decor. It was a mistake for the artists to permit such a crass packaging of their work.

In his writings about his own art Ronnie Landfield tells us it is about the expression of transcendent, universal themes, and his tools are "color, space, and form." On occasion his paintings are mildly suggestive of the meeting of

earth and sky. His work has been consistently non-figurative for many years. These seemingly improvisational paintings are filled with subtleties and suggestive of large open spaces.

Ronnie Landfield's impersonal formalism avoids specificity of place and time. Clearly they are not figural in any way, a tribute to the artist's discipline and strong commitment to what he believes paintings should be about. Certainly they emphasize such formal elements as color and form. They are an examination of color relationships, which have existed throughout the painterly tradition. The drama they generate is solely due to the clashing and melding of beautiful colors in a palpable non-space. They are also about universal and religious themes,

endless vistas and imaginary spaces, manufactured and natural light, the timeless image of the meeting of earth and sky (which is a favorite theme of Helen Frankenthaler, another great Lyrical Abstractionist), and fragile and ephemeral textures generated by overlap and juxtaposition of colors.

Landfield's disciplined focus on the formal qualities of painting perhaps limit the power of these works to generate metaphors that complicate the viewing experience as it occurs through time. However, these images consistently maintain a level of non-specificity, while at the same time they are redolent of the outdoor world. I did not feel like I was looking at an interior at any point. The open sky always felt present. We are left wondering about the where and when of these interactions of colors and forms in space and this universalizes the language of abstraction. There is an inherent contradiction between the artist's emotional connection to these colors and tones, the intricate meanings they have for him and him alone, and his avoidance of the anthropomorphic, the blatantly symbolic. Unlike a different branch of painterly abstraction, we don't play guessing games with these works. We don't feel the need to discover repressed or distorted signs and symbols. Landfield puts all of his faith in color, color as a vehicle of communication...