

The Sun

ARTS & LETTERS



Hard-Edged Visual Pleasure

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February 8, 2007

Larry Zox, who died in December at age 69, was a highly visible figure in the post-painterly, colorfield abstraction movement of the 1960s. He is best known for his colorful, heraldic, geometric abstractions of that time. In a memorial exhibition at Stephen Haller, his subsequent works spanning four decades reflect his overlapping and interfused painterly concerns. Many of the key pieces on view are from his "Gemini," "Diamond Cut," and "Scissor Jack" series. In their smooth, unmodulated planes of color and flattened geometric compositions, these works reflect the reactionary attitude Zox shared with peers such as Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella toward the Abstract Expressionists of the previous generation. Most of these are intensely hued, refreshingly large, clear statements that reflect Zox's fine-tuned focus on form and color. There are also a few small gems such as "Untitled Study," in colored pencil on graph paper and "Beach," a small acrylic on rag board. Both made in 1964, they allow us a rare glimpse of the artist's hand and thought processes. "Beach" is from the "Rotation" series and resembles a flattened pinwheel. Two thin black bands framed with coral, red, and yellow horizontally span a grayblue field. White and yellow wedge shapes at the perimeter suggest rotation. Its uneven paint and visible brush marks belie its provisional nature.

Far back in the gallery is "Untitled" (2006), one of Zox's last paintings, measuring 61 inches by 59 inches. It is impressive to consider, although fighting cancer, he continued to explore new ideas and to extend his visual language. A few strategically placed patches of black and red punctuate vertical skeins of muted teal, coral, impure yellows, and oranges. The colors appear close to the surface and free of all hard-edge strictures. They seem to sway and flow, while a few thin lines of intensified color linger tentatively, as if caught in a breezy dance.

Zox until February 27 STEPHEN HALLER GALLERY 542 W. 26th St., 212-741-7777