

THE NEW LINE PAINTINGS

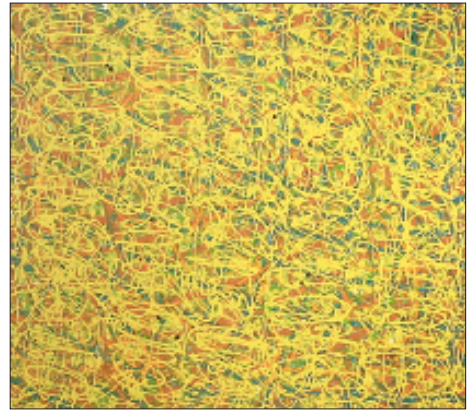
LINEAR ELEMENTS IN GESTURAL FIELDS AND ORCHESTRATED ARRAYS

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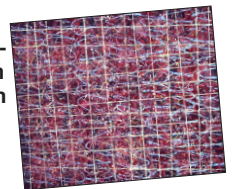
The inclination to focus on horizontal/vertical configurations has dominated my work with linearity since my interest in lines and grids and lattices sprang forth in the early seventies. It has extended into forays with pure lines in groups of drawings and paintings and into the third dimension in several series of sculpture and it will no doubt continue to be a hallmark of what I do. Nevertheless, the New Line Paintings mark something of a departure, at least with my two-dimensional work, for while it contains clearly linear elements, it builds on various aspects of linearity well beyond the horizontal/vertical axis.

The Line Paintings grew out of a series called Fabric Works done in the late seventies. They are large paintings that are entirely horizontal and vertical lines—straight, wavy, jagged, intermittent and so on in wax crayon or acrylics on unprimed canvas. In the new works the all-important lines include these minimalist concepts as well as gestural fields, backgrounds of color and text-based scripts and swirls. As it turned out, the first of the Line Paintings, simple curved lines on a white background, struck me as being stark and spare and I was so dissatisfied with how they looked that I stopped completely and started again twice, once in 1982 and again in 1985 completing only ten works before arriving at the present format in the summer of 2001.

Once underway, I experimented with lines wide and narrow, bold and subtle, lines scraped away, lines flattened using thin paint versus raised using thick paint, light over dark back-



The New Line Paintings are mixed media on canvas (primarily acrylic). *Southwest Sky* (left), 40 by 42 inches, is an earlier work completed in 2001. *Grapefruit Mousse*, (top right) 48 by 54 inches, is from 2002. The works are not signed on the front and may be oriented with any of their four sides up. *Beach Plum Outcome*, (lower right) 50 by 60 inches, 2003, is one of several for which the preferred orientation is such that the predominant lines are horizontal or vertical.



grounds, dark over light, uniform versus mottled, degrees of curvature and density and the use of embedments such as sand, sawdust and small objects. The first of the new works are as small as 2 by 3 feet but the series as a whole is large format painting.

While the works are abstract, they exhibit a nature-based random order somewhat like the way fractals are orderly presentations of chaotic events. I try to make colors and configurations so that their arrays and patterns resonate in a range of intensities. From a base color the dominant image is built up with layers of structured lines, curved, straight or free formed, followed by layers of splashes and spots and later, swirls of (and suggestive of) cursive writing that may appear at first to be erratic.

Abstract expressionism, the kind of art of which these works are examples, was at its peak in the 1950s and 60s with works by Motherwell, De Kooning, Pollock and others being widely exhibited. As a group, it is as diverse as one can find still widely exhibited today. Sometimes called action painting, it is viewed by some as more of an attitude than a formal style.

The Line Paintings allowed me to step beyond the limitations of the

earlier horizontal and vertical lines and move in directions that are more fluid and expressionist. I like working within some degree of immediacy. When I paint I try to be aware of the orderliness I see in nature—and some of its quirks, the way birds fly in flocks except the one straggling behind, the way seashells grow in spirals and the way patterns form when branches fall to the forest floor. I want my paintings to resonate and buzz and command your attention. I want them to make you want to study them closely. I want them to look like something you have never seen before but remind you of something you have.

I don't think many viewers care about art movements and theories but Robert Motherwell said that expressionist work is more closely aligned to emotions than to feelings—more a long term condition anchored in one's personality than a reflection of one's immediate state of mind and in that regard, I suspect these works reveal things I don't even know about myself but I am probably too much a part of the process to suggest what they are. I want viewers to see the humility and order that is in the natural world and feel optimistic about what that means for the future. ❖