

## GALLERY GOING: VISUAL ARTS: REVIEW

by GARY MICHAEL DAULT The Globe and Mail, March 8, 2008



### SHIRLEY WIITASALO AT GOODWATER

Until April 12, 234 Queen St. E., Toronto; 648-406-5052

The four paintings that make up this lean, exhilarating exhibition by this veteran, Toronto-based artist are the best, most exciting, most metaphysically demanding paintings I have seen in a very long time.

Goodwater is normally given over to the making and exhibiting of site-specific work of great accomplishment and sophistication, and these four works by Shirley Wiitasalo are no exception - although, while she did carefully key the works to the space and continually test them there, they were largely painted in her own studio.

The paintings - which bear the deceptively simple titles *Gold*, *Red Blue*, *Green Black* and *Orange* - are remarkably mercurial. Painted in acrylic "interference" colours (which refract the light) rather than in her usual oil pigments, these superb works - which betray less overt "content" than any of Wiitasalo's previous paintings ever have - simply will not keep optically (or, more accurately, retinally) still.

Although very far removed from what is termed Optical Art, the gold of *Gold* slides into shimmering green with the slightest encouragement (as when, for instance, you turn your head a little, or move past it, or stand on tiptoes or even turn out the light). Same with the fleshy-pinks and iridescent silver blues of *Red Blue* or the unearthly greenish sheen of *Green Black*. Devoid of content - except for that which is caused by the act of painting itself - these four majestic Wiitasalos are so softly but insistently articulate they transcend painting to become presences. You can look at them forever.