

Abstract art in the era of global conceptualism

A site for discussion of so-called abstract art, including its past, present and future.

How Hummingbird?

Posted on February 3, 2013 by Robert Linsley

Yesterday I saw a show by Patrick Howlett. It fit well with my recent thoughts on Stella because Howlett's work is also distinguished by sheer pictorial invention. Abstraction should not mean but be, to paraquote a famous poet. The largest piece in the show held my attention for some time. It's composed mainly of triangles, but the most striking feature is that none of the shapes exactly line up or fit in the way they were apparently made to do.



Patrick Howlett, *you may gather/a kind of absurdity/if you see her* 2012

They've all been jiggled out of place—a very intelligent strategy. Another piece that got under my skin was indebted to Klee but not derivative at all, and that is a good thing.



Patrick Howlett, *how hummingbirds choose flowers* 2012

Actually this piece has an important origin in cubism, and that's also very interesting. But Howlett's line is very Klee-like in that it thinks as it moves, and probably the most important effect of the show for me was that it pushed me further off my position on straight lines. Straight lines or shapes with straight edges are hardly unusual in abstraction, but I don't use 'em, and have a bit of an allergy to the same. Like everything else, including reliefs made of cut-out panels, it's what you do with them that counts.

<http://newabstraction.net/2013/02/03/howlett-hummingbird/>