

CONCEPTUAL ABSTRACTION



Image: Ellen Hallie Schiff, *Viol Umber*

What categorizes “new abstraction”? Since the death of canonical Modernism, what can be thought of as Post-Modern art? According to artists in the 1991 *Conceptual Abstraction* exhibition at the Sidney Janis Gallery, new abstraction is characterized by “heterogeneity and allusiveness.” Valerie Jaudon stated that, “Abstract painting is being transformed by an expanded discourse that acknowledges the significance of language.”

From Michael Filan’s artist statement, his abstract works “address the viewer in a language that is private, intense, and consistently self-referential.” The abstract art communicates, or expresses a concept that may be found within the work itself. Oftentimes, the expression is of a sensation, experience, or as Lorna Ritz writes of her work, “the story beneath ordinary, everyday, life things.” The works in this show allude to concepts such as time, natural existence, or selfhood. They also vary in their approach to the action of abstraction. Some use forces such as gravity to move paint, while others apply gestural marks and interact intricately with the materials. What unifies the works included here is their pursuit of a “truth”, whether it be a self-truth, or a truth that that the work alludes to intrinsically.