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And So It Goes: "One Thing Leads to Another" at the Lockwood Gallery

Five Takes on Abstraction, On View Until October 3

By Carl Van Brunt

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Marieken Cochius, detail

Works by five excellent mid-career artists are now on view at The Lockwood Gallery in “One Thing Leads to Another,” curated by Alan Goolman. All the artists are inventive abstractionists, each with distinctively contemporary command of their craft. Karlos Cárcamo’s glowing, subtly textured monochromatic paintings contrast with Matthew Langley’s modulated, banded circles of hues and shades. Both exemplify color abstraction at its best. Marieken Cochius’s layered gestural ink drawings masterfully capture not only the beauty but the energy of our natural surroundings, while Meg Hitchcock and Greg Slick employ signature languages of idiosyncratic form and color to plumb the depths of the human spirit.

Visitors to Lockwood have come to expect Goolman to deliver thoughtful and carefully laid out exhibitions featuring artists selected with his discerning eye for talent. In this show, Goolman ushers in the visitor quietly

with Cárcamo's deceptively simple-looking monochrome paintings. Still waters run deep. A former graffiti artist raised in the Bronx, Cárcamo makes works that may appear quiet on the surface, but in fact belie the hidden layers of their becoming. These paintings reward patient observation, modestly revealing visual delights. Those little flecks of paint on the surface are not accidents. The artist has placed each carefully like a Zen master doing a flower arrangement. The feeling of silence, of quiet and peace you may experience in the presence of Cárcamos' work is the fruit of this effort. Some of his paintings take years to blossom. The plywood frames are not simply containers, they are an integral part of the complete work. The small patch of orange stripes that mark a frame down the hall are there for a reason—to complement the whispering hue of the monochrome— and the placement of the work the frame completes has a purpose also. Goolman, restraining his ebullient personality, is gently guiding you around the space.

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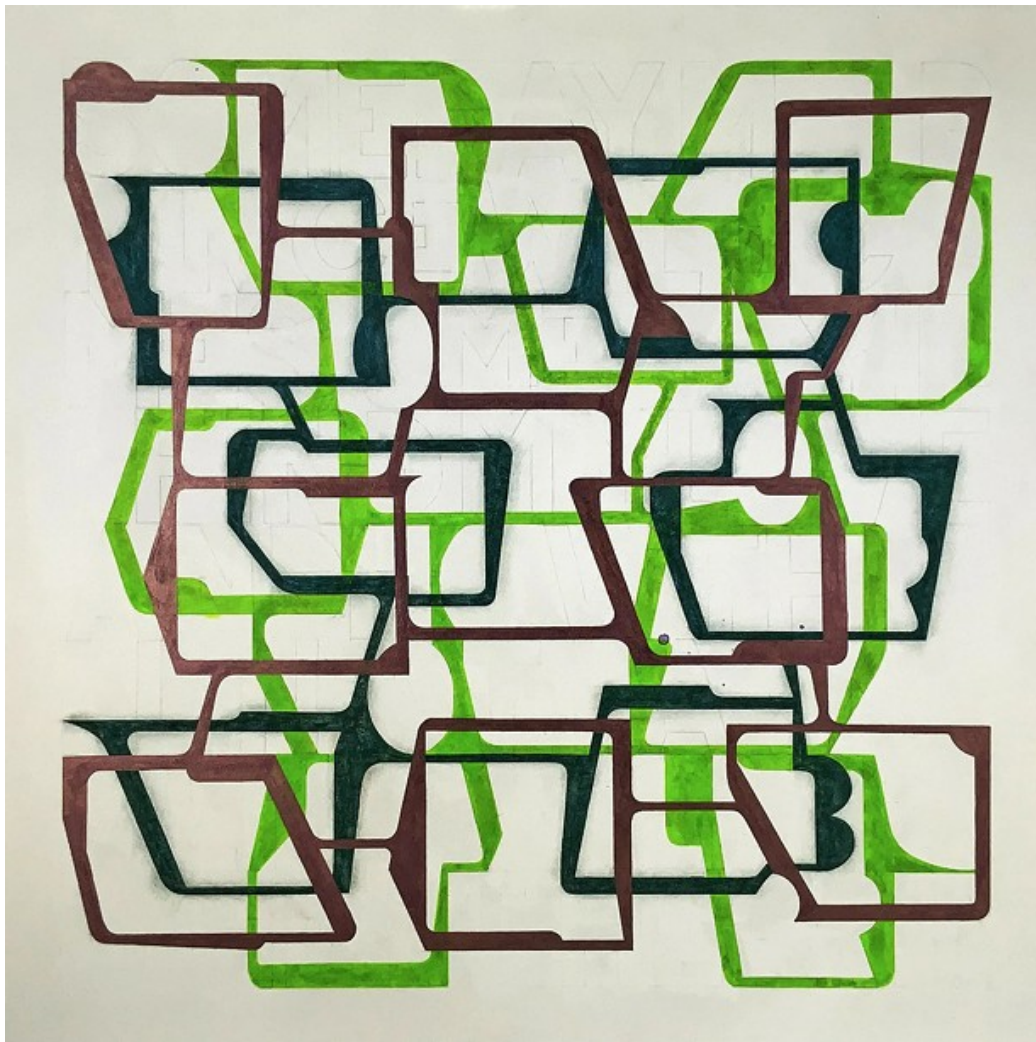
Karlos Cárcamo

Greg Slick's recent hard-edge abstractions share the gallery's central space with Marieken Cochijs's lattice-like free flowing works on paper. Slick's paintings have areas with bold stripes and patterns that help give these works their distinctly contemporary feel. However these adornments are not mere decorative elements but are instead signifiers of the ancient roots of the artist's vision referencing the stone carvings found on ritual objects from thousands of years ago. Those patterns may have been developed by our ancestors in response to hallucinations experienced in rituals involving psychoactive drugs and those same patterns have been proven in scientific

tests to be fundamental components of our contemporary psyches. Slick is immersed in the study of ancient art sites and the artifacts that have been uncovered at those sites, sensing that the use of nature-based sacred geometry is still relevant in our day. Present-day viewers of Slick's art may be unaware of its historical depths, but the monumentality and seriousness of the work conveys the essence the artist strives to express.

Marieken Cochius uses a different kind of mark making—one with roots in contemporary gestural abstraction—to express her passion for the beauty, mystery, and meaningfulness of the natural world. She's after a certain kind of energy that can't be easily captured and held, only experienced and communicated directly. The pieces in this show are records of awakening realized over time and can be seen as a call to the viewer to share in a revelatory experience. She brings a concentrated but open-minded attention to the observation of the flow of ink she directs over the surface of the moistened paper mounted on her angled easel as the drawing she is making unfolds. Her vision simultaneously embraces the micro and the macro. As the layers of her works on paper accumulate, fractalized visual events emerge, each of equal importance to the work overall. A tapestry of these visual moments gradually weaves itself together into a whole. Without specific identifiable imagery to grasp onto, Cochius invites us to join in the conscious emergence of the cosmos.

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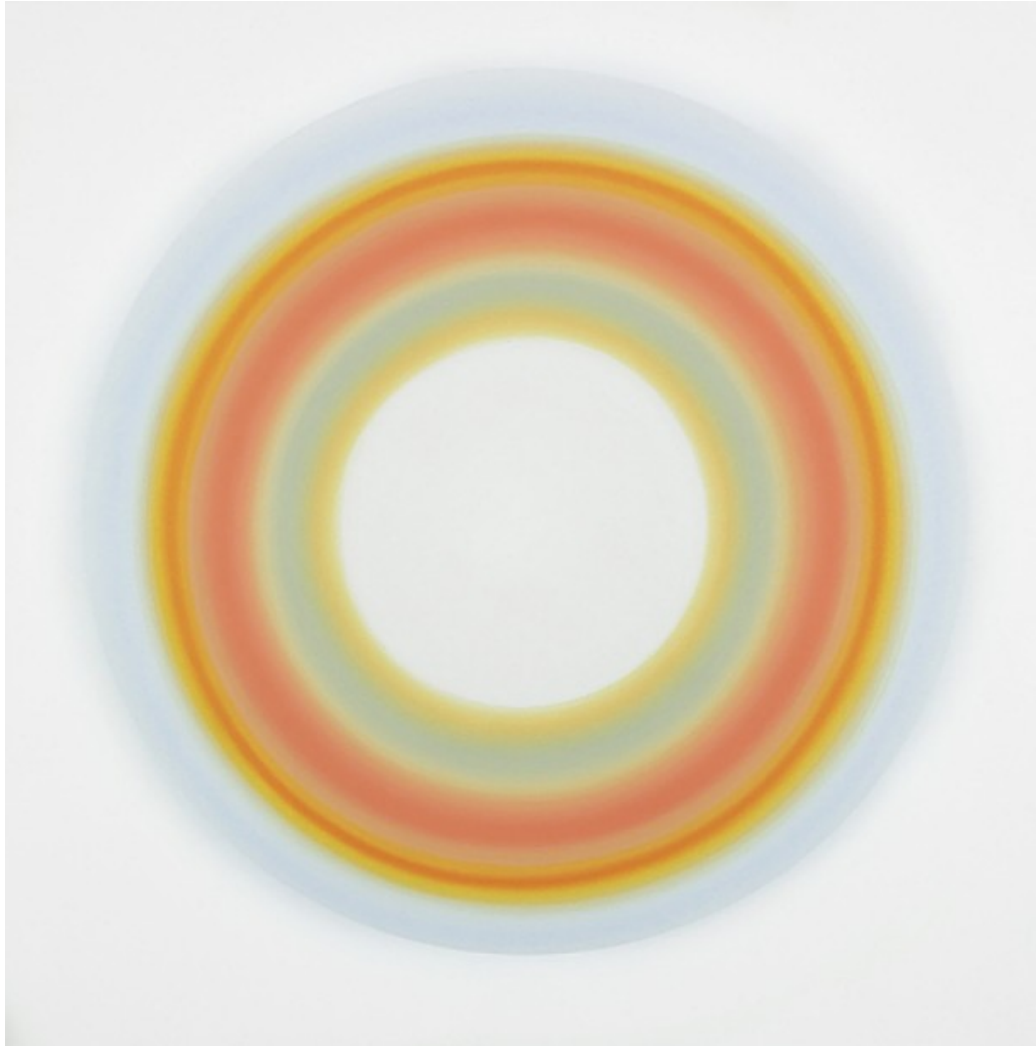
Meg Hitchcock

Raised in an Evangelical Christian family, Meg Hitchcock's development as an artist has been shaped by her search for a wider, more inclusive understanding of spirituality. Words have been central to her process, and she uses them in various evocative ways that are on view in this exhibition. She is also a master of pure abstraction, which you see exemplified in the small, beautifully colored pieces on view in this show. Great care, precision, and inventiveness are characteristic of all her pieces.

Her most recent work uses mantras and song lyrics to create templates for stenciled abstract forms that she then uses to paint overlapping patterns that ultimately hide the underlying text. One could ask what the purpose

might be for covering up text that is motivational for the artist and might also be for the viewer. From the Buddhist perspective that Hitchcock now espouses, every conscious act generates an indelible chain of cause and effect (karma). So the artist who begins a piece by drawing the letter forms that compose a mantra has been changed by that set of actions. Her subsequent painting process, which obscures the mantra, translates and expands her work's essential meaning; one expressive of her personal vision rendered in color and form, the universal language of art.

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Matthew Langley

Color and form reduced to their beautiful experiential facticities are what you get in the abstractions of Matthew Langley. Langley works improvisationally: acrylic on canvas, wet on wet. He jumps in with no preproduction sketches, mostly using stainer brushes, freehand; no taping is involved. Though well versed in color theory, he leaves that behind, working intuitively. One color leads to another. With the circle paintings on view in this show, “it works by the end of the day or it’s painted over,” he says, adding, “If you’re not exploring in the studio, what’s the point?” He notes that working with reductive abstraction, people are always seeing things in his paintings that are not there. The painting is the painting he insists. Let it be.

“One Thing Leads to Another” is on view at the Lockwood Gallery through October 3.

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