

Clint Jukkala

Clint Jukkala creates paintings through a systematic accumulation of structures inspired by the geometric landscape around him. The artist works with color intuitively, building up one area in response to another. This generates a painterly style where hand-rendered edges and lines wobble just enough to be active and dimensional. The clarity of chroma animates flatly painted shapes resulting in a transparent openness that differs from hard edged geometric abstractions. Expanding on the pixel-like characters and forms in his earlier work, Jukkala moves from the shallow space of the figure to emphasize the shifting objects and space around it. This complicates the formal logic of the paintings and engages the viewer by using color relationships to define ambiguous space.

Offset rectangles and sets of multicolored bands activate and define areas of the canvas. In Vista (2009) these active borders contain wider monochromatic bands of subtle stair step shading that lighten and appear to recede to a horizon. It is in these open, stage-like areas that the abstraction functions more representationally. The horizontal bands look like a green ocean under a cloudless, albeit purple, sky. The flatness of the surface and the paint application is undermined by the illusion of a real environment. When the border framing device is truncated, allowing the tonal bands to extend to the bottom edge of the canvas, the composition seems to spill out into the space of the viewer.

A change in Jukkala's strategy is evident through the comparison of two types of very successful paintings. Monument (2008) and Dazed (2009) firmly establish the artist's trademark way of connecting geometric forms and "real things" through the use of lively, circuitous movement and vibrating color. The systematic use of only rectilinear shapes becomes a shorthand to reference the limitations of early computer graphics, weavings or embroidered decoration. In Monument (2008), color was used to dial up the intensity of the overall composition - as opposed to articulating a range of emotional energy, with some areas even a bit somber, as in Vista (2009) or Shift (2008). The increased scale of Vista (2009) allows the function of color to change from a descriptive to an expressive one with the aid of glowing light and atmosphere.

Other canvases stake out the territory between the deeper space of the open compositions and the jaunty, intensely patterned early works. In Shift (2008) rectangular frames stack and overlap vertically or horizontally and act as filters or tanks that cause whatever lies within them to be tinted or to glow. The layering requires a shallow space behind each lens in order for it to stack on top of and tint the one behind it. The outlined perimeters physically define each form moving us around the surface without inviting us very far into the tightly organized spaces. The compositional separation from the edges of the canvas and a Philip Guston-like directness with thickly brushed, simplified outlines

results in an object-like presence. The convincing curiosity Clint Jukkala creates with emphatic color, believable form and illusionistic space is what activates our imagination and delivers rich associations rarely found in geometric abstraction.

James Hull, Curator