

Diane Rosenstein Fine Art

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HAIKU REVIEW of "The Washington School"

by Peter Frank for The Huffington Post

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"The Washington School" installation shot (Thomas Downing, Kenneth Noland)

The term "Washington School" normally connotes a group of painters working in the Washington, D.C., area during the late 1950s and into the 1970s, evolving out of abstract expressionism and towards color-field abstraction. They were unquestionably a pivotal group in postwar American abstraction, but, beyond the role they played in the critical clashes of that era, we've lost sight of what they accomplished.

Fourteen paintings by **Morris Louis, Kenneth Noland, Gene Davis, Thomas Downing, Howard Mehring, and Leon Berkowitz** present all over again the experiential argument for their common practice, a concentration on the impact of color relationships realized - allowed, really - through the minimization of compositional dynamics and the exploitation of painterly scale. The painting thus became both object on the wall and field of visual effect, although - unlike painters such as Rothko and Newman - there was no pretense at achieving transcendental meaning, only transcendental perception.

Whether in Louis' long drips, Noland's expansive bands, Davis' obdurate stripes, Downing's orbiting circles, Mehring's interlocked bars, or Berkowitz's quavering flows, there is a reversal of traditional order: color determines form rather than the other way around. Not an exhaustive exhibition, "The Washington School" still represents a crucial time and place in American modernism whose significance is itself in dynamic historic flux. - Peter Frank.