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RON LINDEN  
Ovsey

Many of the oil paintings in Linden's recent show appeared at first to be nonobjective, while others appeared schematically figurative. Closer inspection, however, revealed many camouflaged figurative references in the seemingly nonrepresentational works; and, conversely, abstract conceptual systems could be discovered in the compositional structure of the apparently more figurative imagery. In other words, Linden's paintings, unlike much of today's work, do not give away all their content at once. Rather, they offer us multiple levels of meaning, adding up to complex statements that include both figurative and nonfigurative elements, past and present time, and references to art and the real world. This body of work reveals its layered meanings slowly and subtly, through visual information rather than through the popular method of captioned condensations that tell us what to think and how to interpret the work. Linden's paintings are directed toward those willing to integrate thinking with seeing.

*Kashmir*, for example, is first seen as a large, sensuous abstract field of richly modulated grays, blacks and whites sometimes executed in broad, transparent strokes, sometimes in fine opaque lines. Linden's liberal use of Rhoplex mixed with paint creates a surface that subtly shifts from matte to glossy, from opaque to transparent and from warm to cool with shifts in the ambient light and the viewing angle. As we continue to look into *Kashmir*, we begin to notice the paint as it seemingly coagulates into hard layers of rock that cumulatively take the form of vast barren mountains. Though unpopulated by human shapes, these mountainous realms are in fact punctuated with other references to the human presence – a paleolithic figure drawing etched into the left-hand section and the Platonic modernist ideal of pure geometry represented on the right. So this painting rewards the persistent viewer with various references to nature and culture, both distant and accessible.

Two canvases hung side by side were nearly identical in composition. Both depict groups of schematized tables and chairs with variation in value (one consists primarily of light objects against a darker ground, the other consists of the opposite scheme) and perspective (one is presented from a bird's-eye view, the other isn't). The precision of execution and composition evident in these paintings suggests the Western penchant for order and control, but there is also something unnatural here. Careful study reveals the peculiarity in the composition to result from the shifting angle of light and shadow, which moves in a circular manner that alludes to the passage of time throughout the day. Linden's dramatic

diagrammatic imagery is linked to the cyclical time of a sundial rather than to that of a mechanized clock. The multiple references in these paintings suggest that the actions of our lives are structured by the ways in which we group objects and measure time.

Melinda Wortz