

Alyse Rosner has had solo exhibitions at the Washington Art Association and the Stamford Museum, both in Connecticut. Rosner was also included in shows at the Oxbow Gallery in Northampton, Massachusetts, the University of Connecticut Gallery, Stamford, as well as The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum's Radius Show. Alyse Rosner received a BFA from The University of Michigan and an MFA in Painting from The American University in Washington, D.C. The artist lives and works in Connecticut.

brochure design: k_critchlow@yahoo.com

Alyse Rosner New Paintings

June 16 – June 26, 2006

Westport Arts Center
51 Riverside Ave
Westport Connecticut 06880

www.alyserosner.com

Cover: *Moment (lashes II)*, 2006
5 1/2 x 6 inches, fluid acrylic on pine.



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On one level, describing the paintings in an Alyse Rosner exhibition is quite simple; all the works are 5 1/2 x 6 inches. Rosner consistently paints on wooden panels cut from standard one-inch thick boards. Given their small scale, the works seem almost chunky; they are thick in proportion to their size. This gives them a sculptural feel – the viewer is aware of them as objects, not just paintings.

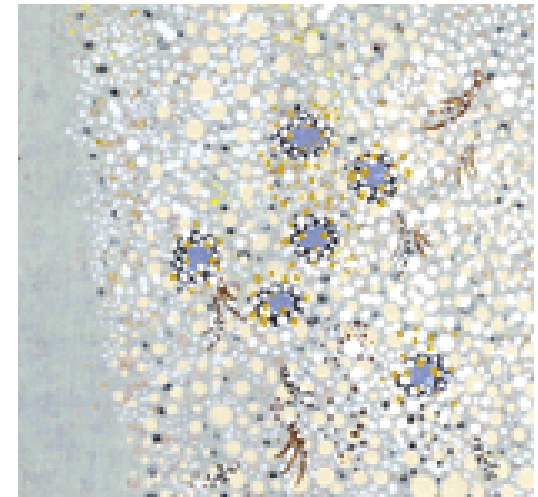
Aware of these sculptural underpinnings, Rosner places the wood so that the grain runs vertically. Before she has made a mark she has made a number of decisions limiting and influencing the paintings she will create. While one might think that she has a consistent arena within which to work, each piece of wood has its own characteristics of grain, knot holes, and texture of surface to respond to.

The artist has said that the small scale and consistent use of a humble support - the board - "originally evolved out of the limitations of my life - space and time constraints - but became crucial to the imagery. The scale of the work allows me to get very involved and develop the detail and tiny mark making."

Rosner has found freedom through limitation. This connects her work in spirit and process to Eastern art, and in fact Rosner cites Indian miniatures, manuscript illuminations, and Japanese screen paintings as influences. All have formal and procedural constraints within which artists have traditionally worked. Interestingly, the one contemporary artist she cites as an influence is Chuck Close, who has built a major and staggeringly inventive body of work by working within self-imposed limitations.



Moment (confetti), 2005
5 1/2 x 6 inches, fluid acrylic on pine.



Moment (confetti) (detail), 2006
5 1/2 x 6 inches, fluid acrylic on pine.



Moment (with light green), 2005
5 1/2 x 6 inches, fluid acrylic on pine.

For Rosner, the limitations of scale and material are just the beginning. She limits herself to a small repertoire of mark making – dots, small dashes, slight curls, lacy swirls – atop veils of color. The mark making is direct, confident, precise, and clear. The viewer can easily see how the works were made, and the connection to another artist Rosner cites as an influence, Philip Guston. Like Guston, Rosner's work has an almost cartoon-like simplicity.

Yet despite the sculptural quality of the support and the simplicity of approach to mark making, these are above all *paintings*. Again, the artist: "Painting is the most direct route to generate the language. The color and surface are just as important as the mark making. Initially, I considered the paintings on wood to be in place of drawings– in the sense that I was processing ideas to see how they would look. As the work develops from piece to piece I control the image more. The experience of printmaking – specifically etching and woodblock printing– also informs the physical process of how the paintings are made. But I choose paint for its directness. In printmaking there is distance between creating the image and the actual print... These are paintings. They are not a representation (picture) of something else. When they work, they become their own thing - and to me, they look like something is happening and I've caught it mid way. Stop action."

Stop action is a good phrase for describing these paintings. The stopped action could be a rising tide, a passing sea of phosphorescence, the swish of a dress, or some more cosmic event.

But, as Rosner states, these are not pictures; the stopped action is *painting*. These works are intensely personal, even private paintings, created



Moment (rickrack V), 2006
5 1/2 x 6 inches, fluid acrylic on pine.

amidst the daily tumult of children and household. Painting under these conditions is indeed a heroic undertaking. Action painting was, in its day, viewed as a brave and iconoclastic achievement. Perhaps we might view Rosner's smaller scale actions as even more of an accomplishment; to create such beauty within the exigencies of the household is to connect to some of the most vital traditions in both art and craft. This is a major achievement. This is art that reminds the viewer to look again at one's own boundaries not as limitations, but as opportunities.

Harry Philbrick
May, 2006

All quotes by the artist from email correspondence with the author, April, 2006. Harry Philbrick is director of The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT.