Editorial: Recommendations

Mark Harrington
At Bakersfield Museum of Art, Bakersfield, California

Recommendation by Roberta Carasso
Published April 28, 2012

With reductionist simplicity melded with expressive depth, Mark Harrington creates flag-like rows of torn and ripped colored horizontal stripes that at first read as bands of rhythmical patterns. The rows alternate between negative stripes and forcefully defined marks. Horizontality becomes verticality with a slight dizzying effect as the image beckons the eye to take in the whole, and then move left then right and back again. Like a palindrome, where a word is read the same backwards and forwards, each painted row has a similar effect. But these are not concrete printed words, but abstract subdued colors, shapes, and space – illusions that keep the eyeballs busy. There is a sense of unending activity; the edge is never reached, nor is resolution.

Even the top and bottom suggest a passage of time and space, like a ladder that goes up and down, while at the same time going back and forth. Harrington is like a mathematician who creates a new visual formula that explains artistic distance: the faraway, the near, and the out-of-focus. Being pulled in each direction and moving at different speeds, each image becomes like soundless music chanting its inner voices. Inventing his own tools and developing the chemistry to render unique surfaces, the artist creates work that seems deceptively easy. Straightforward parallel lines evolve from the thought process of an artist who understands abstraction intimately. Harrington’s art shows us how maximum minimal can be.

Published courtesy of ArtSceneCal ©2012

Image: Mark Harrington, Canyon-Red, 2010, acrylic on linen, 7 1/2 x 5 feet