

Art & Design

Art in Review



Carolina Nitsch Gallery

A work included in "Roy Newell: The Private Myth," at the Carolina Nitsch Project Room in Chelsea.

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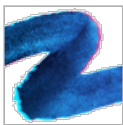
ROY NEWELL

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'The Private Myth'

Carolina Nitsch Project Room

534 West 22nd Street

Chelsea

Through March 13

This exhibition will introduce many people to the vehement, transcendent geometry of Roy Newell, an all but unknown painter who died in 2006 at 92. It also expands the perimeters of the New York School with a

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Michael Werner Gallery

"Le Printemps" by Félix Vallotton, whose work is showing at Michael Werner through April 10.

solid, sudden jolt.

A friend of Abstract Expressionists like Franz Kline and Willem and Elaine de Kooning, Mr. Newell exhibited little during his lifetime and sold less, maintaining what can only be called a very low profile. He worked small, in oil on panels that averaged around 12 inches on a side, building up slabs of smoldering pinks, cerulean blues and Kelly greens. Suggestions of walls, rooms, doors, windows and paintings within paintings are visible, but tend to be overruled by the muscularity of the color shapes. Each has its own physical density; all are clamped in place by the concentrated buildup of paint, laid on in small, jabbing brush strokes. The tension is amazing.

Mr. Newell worked sporadically, sometimes fine-tuning panels for 30 years or more. Not surprisingly, he didn't

like to part with his paintings, and was largely supported by his wife, a schoolteacher named Anne Cohen. He is thought to have made about 50 works in all, maintaining them in a kind of perpetual present. Going by the 28 displayed here, one can imagine that when he liked the direction a painting had taken, he updated everything else, erasing his past.

The dates of these works are mysteries unto themselves. Some are fairly conventional, like 1957 or 1959-1987. Others are models of sporadic attention, like a work barely four-by-five inches dated 1970/1984/1998/1999/2000. Occasionally the years are listed in reverse, as if to acknowledge when the most fruitful work occurred: 1995-98/1983/1972. The date for "Silents," in which a band of blue is pinned against green by verticals of dark and not-so-dark pink, is seemingly arbitrary: 1988, 1966, 1998.

Not surprisingly, Mr. Newell admired Albert Pinkham Ryder, [Cézanne](#), Vuillard and Malevich. When it comes to his contemporaries, one can imagine his work beside masters of internal pressure, modest size and intuitive geometry like Myron Stout, Josef Albers, Giorgio Morandi, Alice Trumbull Mason and perhaps the maniacal Steve Wheeler. The larger, later encrusted geometries and throbbing color of Ralph Humphrey and Peter Halley are germane.

This may be more company than Mr. Newell would appreciate — his obituary in The New York Times described him as irascible — but company is what his paintings need and deserve now that he is gone. They seem well prepared to fend for themselves.

ROBERTA SMITH

JOSH FAUGHT

'While the Light Lasts'

Lisa Cooley

34 Orchard Street

Lower East Side

Through Sunday

The contentious New York gallery debut of Josh Faught, a young artist who lives in Eugene, Ore., is a cause for hope, both despite and because of an abundance of rough edges and loose ends. Mr. Faught, who earned an M.F.A. from the [Art Institute of](#)