

Inna Moshkovich: Nature in the Abstract

It is highly probable that, having been born in Odessa, Ukraine, and having settled in Sydney, Australia, Inna Moshkovich never heard of Jon Schueler. Nonetheless, her paintings show a kinship with that older artist, who would certainly have been known as one of the most gifted of the Abstract Expressionists, had he not moved to Scotland at the crucial moment when America's most significant homegrown art movement was gaining momentum. For like Schueler, who drew inspiration from the Scottish skies, Moshkovich is inspired by nature in a manner much more direct than most other abstract painters.

Just how successful Moshkovich is at translating the particulars of landscape into purely painterly terms can be seen in the exhibition "Out From Down Under & Beyond" at Agora Gallery, 530 West 25th Street, from May 10 to 30 (Reception: May 15 from 6 to 8 PM). In both her acrylic paintings and innovative wool collages, Moshkovich captures a sense of light and movement that brings her compositions alive in a unique manner. More vital to her endeavor than the lay of the land or solid forms are atmospheric elements, which she conjures in a manner that suggests both the lessons of Impressionism and the great British landscape painter Turner's statement about painting with "tinted steam." For Moshkovich has that exceedingly rare ability

to make the most ethereal elements in nature palpable in pigment.

Perhaps the most striking evidence of this can be seen in her "Play of Light Series," focusing on skies in which wispy cloud formations appear shot through with intense sunlight. In these large canvases, delicate dappled strokes of pale yet luminous hues evoke specific qualities of air and natural illumination with an immediacy that eludes most realists. By limiting her composition to an expanse of sky, cut off from land and other

referents, Moshkovich captures the vital spirit of her subject without sacrificing the abstract integrity of her compositions.

Moshkovich's approach arises not so much out of a desire to avoid describing the particular details of landscape, but out of a genuine need to celebrate those less obvious qualities of light and air that animate nature as a whole. Thus she achieves not merely the semblance of abstraction that results from arrangements of nonobjective shapes and color areas, but the deeper distillation of essences that true abstraction involves.

Watery expanses also provide Moshkovich



"Ocean Surface 1"

an opportunity to conjure up a sense of movement and shifting light, as seen in her "Ocean Surface Series," where the colors are more somber than in the previous series and the forms take on a more gestural thrust akin to Abstract Expressionism, even while retaining the sense of subtlety and restraint that sets her apart from her predecessors of the New York School. Indeed, if she shares qualities in common with any of those older artists,

perhaps her closest affinity may be for the early abstractions of Philip Guston, with their sensitive, jotted strokes and soft pinkish colorations.

However, Inna Moshkovich has a unique grasp of nature, formed in Ukraine, where she remembers the changes of seasons as "quite drastic" and transplanted to the rugged terrain of Australia. Thus the synthesis of the actual and the abstract that she achieves is a unique accomplishment.

—Maurice Taplinger