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By Kenneth Baker

Charles Arnoldi, "New Paintings" Review

Arnoldi's latest: Los Angeles painter Charles Arnoldi has added a new chapter to the long adventure of his abstract work.

Modernism samples two modes of recent painting, on canvas and on aluminum, plus a 1986 painted construction that accounts in part for the expressionistic look of several new things on view.

Visitors who know Arnoldi's past work will be struck by pieces such as "Critic" (2014) and "Vintage" (2013), consisting of patterns of interlocking polygons of flat color.

The paintings' ancestry goes back through the more severe strain of 1960s color field painting to the roots of abstract art in early 20th century European constructivism. But Arnoldi appears to care less about pedigree than about isolating the difficulty, maybe the impossibility, of viewing abstraction

without extraneous associations.

Merely study the geometry of "Vintage," and you start to see shadows, receding walls and other inklings of architecture, and maybe an occluded flag or two.

The paintings on aluminum eliminate all but right angles and seem to burn at a lower wattage, even taking their less vivid color and finish into account.

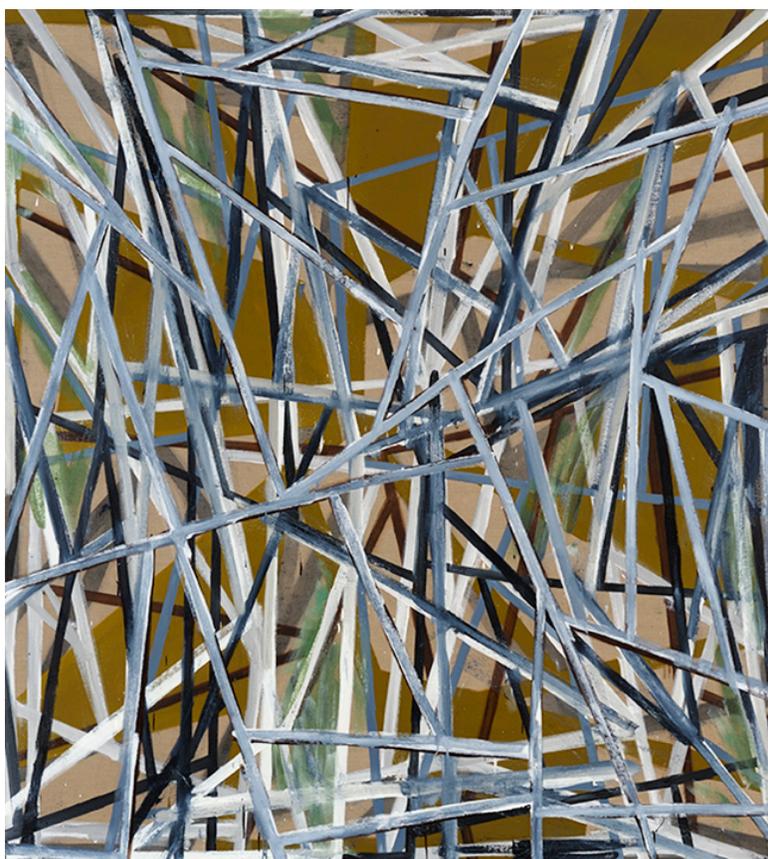


"Vintage", 2013, oil on linen, 38 x 32 inches

Oblique angles matter, Arnoldi mutely argues, to the point of demarking a sort of zero degree of content.

They matter in spades in a canvas such as "Wheel House" (2013), which is all angles: a thicket of crisscrossing paint strokes.

In its spiky avidity, "Wheel House" might even read as a rejoinder to the edge-to-edge lyricism of Brice Marden's loopy abstractions, though Arnoldi's picture clearly grew out of his own earlier work such as the 1986 example here - an actual thicket of painted sticks attached to painted plywood.



"Wheel House", 2013, oil on linen, 92 x 83 inches

Charles Arnoldi: New Paintings: Through April 26. Modernism, 685 Market St., S.F. (415) 541 0461
www.modernisminc.com.