

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

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REVIEW OF KIM ANNO SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE

Paintings on aluminum take advantage of reflective surface

-Kenneth Baker, Art Critic for the San Francisco Chronicle
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Painting as an art endures partly because it shows us things we need to see. To anyone who has followed the work of Kim Anno, her new paintings at Patricia Sweetow's objectify creative growth. A world that appears bent on self-destruction makes us want to believe it real.

Anno's work has been growing gradually more relaxed and adventurous, within tricky self-set limits. She has abandoned her seductive palette and here and there danced her hand close to the edge of nonsense.

She works now on a completely impervious surface -- aluminum -- that supplies the paintings with a hard-to-control inner light. The metal asserts itself unpredictably in response to changes in ambient light. The gallery has turned down the overhead lamps, but the daylight leaking from two shaded windows forces a viewer to try many viewing distances and angles, as Anno herself must have to do while working.

Anno's technique consists of veiling and unveiling her surfaces with paint, trying to harness the metal's cold sheen. Visitors who know the late '50s "Veils" of Morris Louis may think of them here, especially of their dour colors.

But Barnett Newman comes to mind more readily in front of Anno paintings such as

"Rapt" (2004), "Pluto" (2004) and "Then" (2004).

In a couple of pieces, Anno has apparently applied paint with or through thin fabric, producing an effect that might be described as wood-grain moire.

But the power lies with pictures such as "Pluto" and "Then," which can leave us wondering how much control Anno has over the behavior of color.

Two references collide in "Then," perhaps evoking Anno's sense of her historical vantage point as an artist.

The painting's vertical shape and striations and its empty border recall early mature abstractions by Newman. But near the top and left of the panel, Anno has scored looping lines into the wet paint.

Anyone who saw the 2002 Eva Hesse retrospective at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art will relate Anno's lines to the draping tangles of polyurethane rope with which Hesse challenged minimalism's hard geometry. Anno suggests that abstract painting must now find depth not in illusionism but in the layers of memory and response, through which we see, unconsciously at first, new art.