

PATRICIA SWEETOW GALLERY

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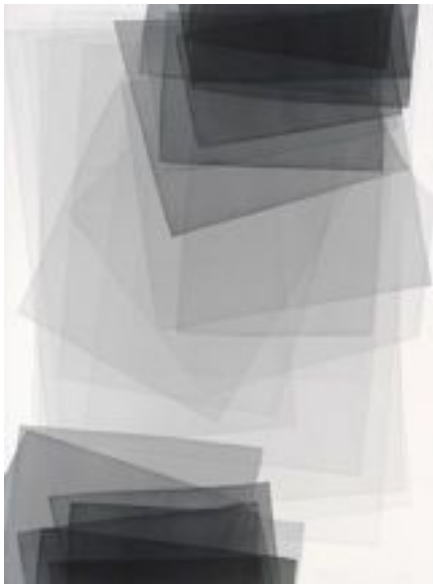
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST NEWSPAPER

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Cornelia Schulz's "The Direction of Particulars" (2010), oil, acrylic and alkyd resin on canvas.



"Untitled 23-4" (2010), watercolor on paper, by Joachim Bandau, is part of "Red & Black."

Schulz and Bandau: In recent pieces at Sweetow, Bay Area painter Cornelia Schulz goes deeper into a vein she has worked for some years: the multi-part shaped canvas as a foil for one of abstract painting's potential weaknesses: the merely decorative.

Around 1960, the traditional pictorial rectangle began to be seen as arbitrary, enough so that certain abstract painters worked to make each new picture's exterior profile an active ingredient

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rather than a rote decision.

Schulz does not have to remake that case. She can think freely in terms of a painting's shape and surface details interacting.

"The Direction of Particulars" (2010) incorporates echoes of the painted fan, of constructivism and [Art Deco](#) so comfortably that their dissonance registers as aesthetic energy rather than disharmony.

She involves the eye in very disparate kinds of detail, from the puckered dollops of alkyd to sharply painted matchbook-size geometrics and unbounded passages sanded to look threadbare.

German artist Joachim Bandau shows more of the astonishing black on white watercolor abstractions that Sweetow has presented before. Even a viewer lacking any sense of the technical finesse they embody will realize that nothing else in contemporary art compares with them.

A piece such as "Untitled 23-4" (2010) appears to depict from above disheveled stacks of smoky plate glass or acrylic sheet. In fact, it represents nothing other than prodigious control in applying successive layers of watercolor.

Bandau's latest venture in sculpture cannot claim the same success. Carving subtly contoured planes in wood that he then has custom-lacquered in Burma, Bandau produces abstractions that suggest uninscribed plaques, with a distant reminiscence of [John McCracken](#)'s enameled planks.

In contrast to the watercolors, it is hard to guess what Bandau hopes to get from the effort that goes into these sculptures.