

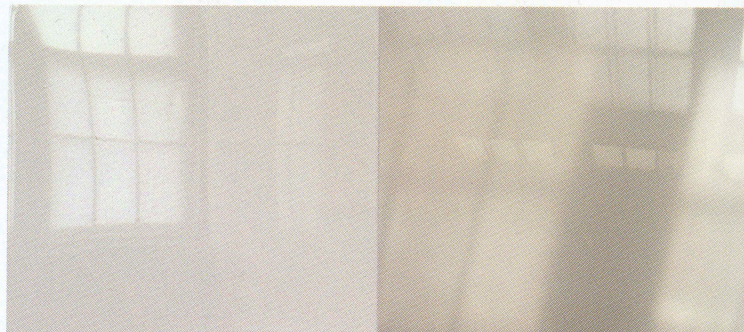
Expressionism, and its investigations of space and surface. The title invokes the elasticity of painting, both physically and in terms of its vitality as a creative medium.

Of the six artists, **Bernhard Hildebrandt** is the only one who engages in a painting practice driven by contemporary theory, questioning the options for painting in the context of new technologies and the pervasiveness of image culture. Consequently, his work seems somewhat out of place. Yet, Hildebrandt's conceptual-critical investigations and the alluring surfaces of his paintings—simultaneously placid and intense, inviting and repellent, high and low—serve an important role in the exhibition: they slow the currents of nostalgic reverie and promote a wider dialogue.

Hildebrandt creates large-scale diptychs that function literally and figuratively as *tête-à-têtes* for painting and photography, displaying the sensuousness of this

extend beyond the picture plane, across and into the wall. Patiently fabricated by the application of multiple layers of paint with wide, soft brushes, the works reveal in their production of a new kind of opacity through a transparent medium. The intrigue of these matte fields lies in their uncanny density, and the artist's commitment to its construction—a painted *substance* that has the consistency of fine, very thick felt and is poised to absorb every ray of light and sound wave in the gallery.

Three paintings by **Mary Shand**, a quiet and relatively unknown artist who died in 2003, are hung in the second room. Guided by an intimate relationship with nature, her paintings enlist processes that establish patterns visually akin to those of the natural world. Reminiscent of the poured vocabulary of Pat Steir while distinct in their calmer pictorial resolution, two paintings seem to picture the vertical traffic between



Bernhard Hildebrandt, *Untitled*, 2005, left panel: polyurethane enamel on Plexiglas; right panel: digital c-print on Plexiglas, 43 x 96 inches (courtesy of the artist)

GLEN ALLEN, VA

Curated by Elizabeth Schlatter and Gwen Van Ostern, ***Thick & Thin*** [Gumenick Family Gallery, The Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen; March 20—May 14, 2005] features work by six contemporary regional abstract painters, five of whom operate within the legacy of modernist abstraction. Neither anti-theory nor reactionary, the exhibition displays an almost too calm confidence in the inherent formal and expressive possibilities of pure painting—a curious (post)modernism driven by an earnest loyalty to certain tenets of Abstract

longstanding and flourishing relationship. Each of his three large-scale works juxtaposes an immaculately painted field on the left (polyurethane enamel on Plexiglas) with its full-scale photographic representation on the right. These representations capture moments of the soft reflected forms of window structures and shadows in the artist's studio; and, the reflective surface of each diptych functions in the present tense, capturing moments of viewing in the gallery. In works that echo the unadulterated surface of the glossy c-print, Hildebrandt pursues painting's envy and imitation of the photograph. Through a reciprocated simulation, he confirms the visual wealth of both media.

Diane Szczepaniak's four nonobjective, spare watercolors face Hildebrandt's paintings. The rectangular space of these cropped color fields begs to

skybound condensation and large bodies of earthly water. Obscure web-like structures across the middle of the compositions suggest the interplay of wind with rain.

Alluding to nature in different ways, the works of **Joanne Kent** and **Sandi Ritchie Miller** are exhibited in the same room. Improvised compositions of nebulae on Plexiglas, Miller's work is informed by photographs of the cosmos. Kent proceeds through a tactile and sculptural build-up of paint to suggest the layered irregularities of aging tree bark or the prickly husks and seed pods of plants. Sixteen small paintings by **June Shadoan** occupy the hallway between the gallery's two rooms. Installed as two facing grids of eight paintings, Shadoan's slabs initially evoke Richter's squeegeed nonobjective surfaces, but gradually assert themselves as stout building blocks of pure paint. —Paul Ryan