

JACK TWORKOV, Nancy Hoffman Gallery; HORACE PIPPIN, Terry Dintfass Gallery:

JACK TWORKOV is 77. He recently exhibited 12 new canvases and 4 smaller pieces. These new works, in which he claims to consider "line and painterly mass" anew, form an accomplished exercise.

Untitled (Q1-76-#1) would seem to be the progenitive work in the show. The canvas surface, 80 inches square, is broken up into segments described by varying acute and obtuse angles. The angles radiate from a single point, where vertical and horizontal lines intersect, and where, in many of the works, a red dot is found (like coordinate points plotting material stress in some engineering diagram). In the lower left-hand section of the work at hand a square, broken into numerous rectangles, wedges and rhomboids, would seem to stabilize the work. From within the sides of this square the widening angularity of the lines, the painting's various geometric forms, and all of its colors, emanate.

The fascination of the show is the tension, if not anomaly, created by regimented geometric design in conjunction with a gestural application of paint—a mottled, short brushed stroke recalling Abstract Expressionism but now restricted to the area contained by an angle, its very geometric construction, and the solid frontality of three colored forms raining downward with brief strokes in alternating hues: blue, light gray, dark gray; pink, light gray, dark gray; pink, light yellow, ochre; blue, light yellow, ochre. . . . The brighter colors always constitute the first layer of paint, creating a feeling of deepening space and lightshot architectonics.

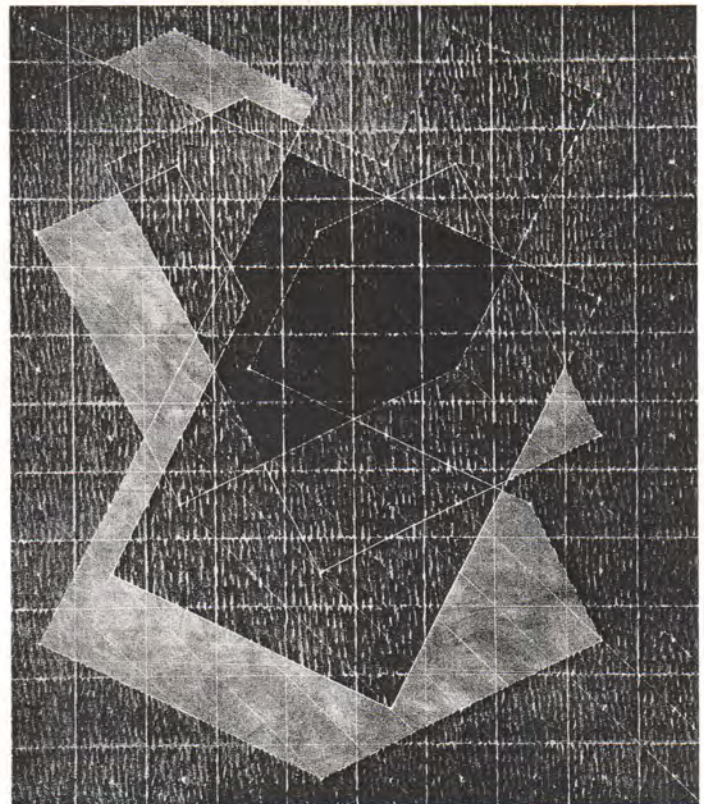
In the "Knight" series the lines defining the various segments represent the moves of the knight on a chess board. In *Knight Series #5*, the field is flatly painted in a moderately saturated rust with which several complex geometric forms are interlayered. The uninterrupted areas of these forms have been painted in characteristically mottled, gestural strokes of umber on rust. In the overlapping areas, the umber heavily overlays the rust, creating a variegated intensity of shadow and light, or rather of alternating, compacted gestural densities—as if to propound a history reversed from Minimalism to painterliness.

In the further complexity of *Knight Series #6* the general ground is of the same mottled umber-on-rust that defines the density of #5. This work, however, takes on the remote delicacy of some bare structure hanging in space. This effect depends upon the use of light gray filamentous lines to describe, against a dark field, the square grid, the various diagonals crossing the canvas, and the outlines of geometric but oddly angled planar forms. The forms show considerable textural variation: flat rust without detail; a heavily applied darkened umber that creates a heightened physicality that pushes forth from the wire-thin gray grid.

In the cheerfully colored canvases *Mounting Olympia* and *Olympia*, various webs of radiating lines interact with the overall square grid. Roughly four-fifths of the canvas is taken up with the description of highly colored geometric forms, more loosely painted, more gestural in the application of short drips of intense blue, orange, pink, and a less intense green and gray. Such coloration depicts the central area of the canvas, whose perimeters remain clear of this gestural stroke, deploying an all-over field of diffused runs of muted pinks, yellows, blues, and grays. The upper fifth of the canvas is painted flat gray, broken into two horizontal rectangles, each bisected by a simple vertical and topped by a horizontal running the length of the canvas. But the gray does frame the entire work—weighted more heavily at the top, with a narrow band that could lift the linear, angular, and highly colored main motifs of the piece from the field.

This illusion of upwardly hovering planes, caught in floating trajectory from the paintings' nebulous fields, points in these works to a meaning beyond technical proficiency. We may see in it Tworkov's struggle to redefine himself after the expansive, violent gesticula-

tion of Abstract Expressionism had expended its energy, so like the same struggle that has largely characterized America in the '70s after the failed political violence of the '60s. The move is one of substance, the reinstatement of orderly structure—as, here, in the architectonics of Tworkov's paintings relate. Yet his brief gestural brushstrokes affect a physical depth that projects the regimental planes away from the anonymous standard of the grid motif. And now, rising upward, a new volition is seen. I imagine it only self-constraining and inexorable.



Jack Tworkov, *Knight Series #6*, 1976, oil on canvas, 90 x 75".