

Laura Sue Phillips: Flower Target Paintings

Laura Sue Phillips' work exhibits all the precision and rigor expected from a first-class minimalist. Based on a series of concentric circles in graduated and contrasting colors, her new paintings on panel and paper evoke the color field work of Kenneth Noland – an obvious comparison. The similarity, however, is largely circumstantial: where Noland's early work veers into (or emerges out of) expressionism, Phillips' remains rigorously formal; and where Noland's later work is predominantly optical in orientation, Phillips' work focuses on the deeper, more complex resonances that underlie vision itself.

Well established in the New York art scene, Phillips studied at Hunter College, where she received her MFA under the tutelage of substantial geometric abstractionists like Vincent Longo and Sanford Wurmfeld. A native Californian, there is a lighter, airier, less premeditated feeling to Phillips' output than is typical of New York hard-edge painters, a *jeu d'esprit* that also comprehends the complex politics of reductivist art-making. Although containing "Pop" overtones, her style is more idiosyncratic than hybrid, the product of long years of continuous confrontation with art's most intractable medium.

In choosing the circle as her structuring condition, Phillips complicates the minimalist agenda, not just by introducing shape as a factor but also in terms of execution. Precision in circle-making presents its own challenges and most minimalists privilege the rectilinear. Despite her painstaking technical prowess, however, hard-edged rigor is more a means than an end in Phillips' agenda. While her work is deeply engaged with questions of color and medium specificity, it is equally interested in the *gestalt* of visual perception, the way in which visual experience is related to states of transcendental "seeing."

There are two different tracks in the *Flower Targets* series: one, acrylic on plywood panel, highlights process and materiality. The image is finished to a plastic flatness that contrasts with its wooden support and visible, penciled guidelines. In this respect, the work on wood takes on an object-nature, the painted center rising out of the surface of the support, which simultaneously maintains its own essential thing-ness. Additional semi-circular nodes surrounding the outermost band of the "target" reiterate the roundness of the image, offering it a floral iconicity that further contributes to its material solidity.

The second group – watercolor on paper – employs the target motif as well, yet produces strikingly different effects. Built with layers of over-painting that gradually attenuate toward the edges, these minimalist mandalas evoke a depth that is simultaneously spatial and spiritual and profoundly related to embodied perception. While some are monochromatic, the more colorful of the series resemble "Ojo de Dios," indigenous Mexican "yarn paintings" representing a symbolic portal into the unknowable.

StandPipe Gallery is extremely proud to present this significant exhibition, the first major solo show of the artist's work in several years. Phillips' work is held in numerous noteworthy collections and has been reviewed in *Artforum* and *The New York Times*.

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