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Art in Review

'Primary Atmospheres'

Works From California
1960-1970

David Zwirner
525 West 19th Street
Chelsea
Through Feb. 6

Is there a New York gallery that does Minimalism better than David Zwirner? Coming a year after a transcendent show of Fred Sandback's string sculptures and coinciding with a gorgeous installation of colored light by Dan Flavin still on view, this ravishing, museum-quality exhibition presents minimalistic works from the 1960s by 10 California artists.

Perceptual experience is the unifying factor. Projected into the corners of otherwise dark and empty rooms, James Turrell's wedges of intensely colored light seem more than just immaterial. It is as if sections of a virtual reality had been imported into reality. Doug Wheeler's square panel, whose internal, fluorescent framing elements fill a room with hazy white light, creates a similarly magical but more diffuse luminosity.

John McCracken's thick planks leaning against the wall — one bubble-gum pink and the other fire-engine red — have the sheen of surfboards. If you squint you might see them as extrusions of pure color. Conjoined podlike forms with cherry-candy metal-flake surfaces by De Wain Valentine also exemplify the California "finish fetish" aesthetic.

Elevated on a low, clear pedestal, a three-and-a-half-foot cube of smoky, semireflective glass by Larry Bell seems to hover and contain a mysterious otherworldly interior, while Laddie John Dill's installation of glass sheets imbedded in fine sand and illuminated by buried green lights is like an extraterrestrial landscape in a science-fiction movie. Alternately, Craig Kauffman's vacuum-formed reliefs resemble giant pieces of jelly candy. Like the cast acrylic sculptures by Robert Irwin, Peter Alexander and Helen Pashgian, they unite optical intrigue and hedonistic sensuality. New York Minimalism was never so deliciously enchanting.

KEN JOHNSON



CATHY CARVER/DAVID ZWIRNER, NEW YORK
"Triple Disk Red Metal Flake — Black Edge" by De Wain Valentine at David Zwirner.