

Color in Motion: Dion Johnson's Abstract Paintings of Light, Shape, and Color

The aptly named "Chromatic Momentum," the new show at De Buck Gallery by the Los Angeles-based painter Dion Johnson, is all about color and motion.

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Dion Johnson
Feel The Sky, 2014
De Buck Gallery

Not that it's easy to put into words the striking visual impact of Johnson's boldly hued abstract paintings—images that look, at turns, like bright ribbons of color, or light refracted along the edges of falling water, evoking fanciful snowscapes, or visions of earth from a spaceship. The art critic David Pagel reaches for similes to explain the effect: “The L.A. painter makes color fat, like the belly of the Buddha . . . Johnson also keeps color taut, like a sail in a gale, stretched to its physical limits in gracefully bulging curves that are elegant, functional and forceful.”

Fat but taut, elegant but forceful: such descriptions might seem paradoxical unless you're looking at Johnson's starkly linear *Electricity* (all works 2014) or *Flower*, in which half the canvas is a flat field of color, rounded off against abstract forms in lush lilac, dark charcoal, and electric blue. In *Sting Ray*, crisply delineated vertical shapes twist together, bound on one side by a wash of black and on the other by a field of white, a sort of abstract yin and yang, suspended in space. The hard-edged *Vampire Mirror* looks like its title suggests: eerie and blank, the forms indiscernible.

It's not Johnson's first show at De Buck: the artist exhibited the show “Velocity” at the New York gallery in 2012, returning to Los Angeles to show another collection, “Vivid Slipstream,” at Western Project in 2013. As with “Chromatic Momentum,” the exhibitions' titles describe the work—brash but sophisticated, dynamic, giving the impression of constant motion. The work, described by Pagel as “idiosyncratic compositions [that] set up kinky rhythms—beats and echoes that lead one way only to be interrupted by any number of possibilities,” has earned Johnson coverage in publications as diverse as the *New York Times*, the *LA Times*, *ARTnews*, *Artforum*, *The Huffington Post*, and *L.A. Weekly*.

—Bridget Gleeson

“Chromatic Momentum” is on view at De Buck Gallery, New York, Jan. 8–Feb. 14, 2015.