

THE SENSE OF ABSTRACTION

Doug Meyer *Los Angeles, October 2006*

Abstract painting at its best serves as evidence that poetry is possible without words or text. This notion is the driving force in the work of Saule Piktys. The wide variety of her imagery is propelled by a need to make visible what cannot be seen in the world of representation and what cannot be said with words. While many artists today are content to present the world as random and ironic, Piktys seeks out associations that address a connectedness of the material and spiritual worlds. In this way her work stands as the antithesis of Pop Art's cool acceptance of our physical environment and bourgeois values. Her imagery is coming from a place deep inside herself, within her rich personal history. She seeks out abstract equivalents of the observable world in order to de-materialize and re-configure them in her own way. Piktys turns water into vapor so we might inhale its essence instead of letting it go to our stomachs. There is a fleeting sensation to all that she creates that speaks about the passage of time affecting the visible world. It is as if she visualizes the moment in which we perceive, that transitory instant of time, light, space, and form in synchronicity.

It is a bit of a paradox that to capture this rush of momentary confluence Piktys must labor so intensively on her paintings. She patiently teases out illusions from swaths of deep colors, rubbing, sanding, and burnishing works into a meeting of pigment and surface. Her compositions often have a centralized, window-like quality. There is a sense of airy openness that provides a passage for her thoughts. In paintings such as CAUSALITY there is a weathered appearance that hints of her European roots, bits of L'Art Informel, the CoBrA

School, Dubuffet and Tapes. It is as if she, too, is sifting among the ruins of a debased culture. But the distressed scrapings of this work and others is less about the effects of entropy than it is about refinement, about using very human efforts to craft an illusion of something that cannot be conjured up in any other way. Of the many influences on her work it is perhaps Constantin Brancusi and Joan Miro who provide the best comparison in terms of abstract illusionism. Piktys recalls seeing the sculpture BIRD IN SPACE by Brancusi and feeling profoundly connected to the work. This highly finished vertical swirl of golden bronze is neither bird, nor space, yet it reduces its subject to its essence: matter freed from the pull of gravity by the unfathomable brilliance of its natural design. To understand it requires that we visualize the invisible energy that drives nature itself.

Nature is integral to the abstract imagery of Saule Piktys, yet its visual appearance is subverted by visual contradictions of subject matter, scale and color. She seems to paint from all directions. Her paintings often work as either vertical or horizontal. It is apparent that a dense illusory space rather than the pull of gravity determines the linear and formal arrangements in her compositions. Yet the desire to find parallels in her work to the visible world creates a tension underscored by her own avoidance of literal representation. OCEAN FROM ANOTHER SIDE is a body of work that observes the world from a singular perspective shaped on two continents, looking outward from, rather than into, the familiar pictorial window of traditional Western art.
