

PETER DAYTON • ROBERT KELLY  
REX LAU • ALAN SHIELDS • KELLY SPALDING

From March 22 through April 30, 2007, The Drawing Room is pleased to present paintings and mixed media works by Peter Dayton, Robert Kelly, Rex Lau, Alan Shields and Kelly Spalding. This group exhibition highlights five artists whose diverse sources of inspiration generate surprising convergences in their formal use of color, pattern and geometry, as well as technique and sensibility. That each artist is distinctly engaged with the canon of 20<sup>th</sup> century abstraction underscores its ongoing vitality in the discourse of contemporary art.

In Peter Dayton's recent surfboard series—warm toned, rectangular wood panels punctuated with vertical stripes of color and coated with clear resin—the artist makes playful references to post-painterly abstract artists such as Kenneth Noland and Barnett Newman with a tongue-in-cheek riff on surf culture and the high gloss of contemporary consumerism. For Kelly Spalding, the ubiquitous stripe motif carries different associations. While she acknowledges its prevalence in commercial contexts, she also views the stripe as an “expression of the confluence of nature and architecture; like a beam of light striking at a given angle.” Spalding appropriates striped linen dishtowels as the textured ground for contrasting bands of painted color in her small, formidable canvases.

Spalding's interest in recycling materials is echoed in the work of Robert Kelly and the late Alan Shields (1944-2005) who also share her desire to embrace a measure of spontaneity. Kelly begins his striking collages on panel with intuitive arrangements of overlapping found papers in irregular grids that form a warm ivory-toned ground for his painting. His restricted palette and minimal shapes converge in abstract geometric compositions where the weight of each form is carefully calibrated to achieve a critical sense of balance. The patina of aged papers, powdered charcoal and rich oil pigments imbues Kelly's work with an inviting tactile quality. Equally enticing effects appear in Dayton's resin surfaces and Spalding's icing-like swathes of painted color.

Shields is represented by a selection of works on paper and canvas that reveal his masterful use of pattern and color. Commenting on his innovative experimentation with materials, Robert Hughes notes that Shields used “the nature of his materials to open out into the larger frame of nature itself.” Examples of Shield's characteristic mixed media paintings show the inventive “drawing” technique he developed using sewing machine stitches to create meandering colorful patterns with thread and yarn. With this process, Shields eschewed the conventional division of fine art and craft without abandoning the aesthetic tenets of formal abstraction. In a more traditional medium, Rex Lau's vibrant oil paintings distill views of the natural world in compact celebrations of undulating line and color. Lau's wavy “stitches” of painted color travel through rhythmic landscapes that conjure associations with American Modernist painters such as Arthur Dove and Marsden Hartley.

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