

Brian Wills, *Untitled*, 2006, oil, archival vinyl tape on wood, 50" x 48", at The Happy Lion, Los Angeles. (Photo: Joshua White.)

works' satisfyingly wavering position on the shoulders of the weighty history of abstraction, there is something about this sea of minutely quivering bits of color, one next to another in a quilt-like patterns, that feels weightless.

Each of the six abstractions in Wills's solo exhibition at The Happy Lion is composed of long horizontals alternately wrapped or painted with rows of thin verticals of paint, floss or tape. The panels create a lattice support for color which seems to hover ever so slightly above the wood in an effect like the glow around a bulb. In one piece (all are untitled), the predominance of pale wood allows the brilliant green

strips of dental floss that skip across it to resemble, if not exactly grass, stems, or leaves, then the idea and evocation of these. The artist's meticulous application of, in this instance, dental floss, oil paint and varnish, is evidenced and celebrated by attention to subtleties such as the width of each band, variations between them, and a vigilant and melodic attention to color. The result is a harmonious panel where brilliant purple infrequently punctuates a delicate abundance of green stalks. Red, orange and pale blue chime in on the high notes and the overall effect is a visual variant of jazz.

Color is used in a variety of ways to achieve this effect. One of the pieces, executed with oil and enamel on wood and predominantly monochromatic, creates a turquoise plane broken at intervals by white or black bands, the tension lending an ethereal luminosity to the control of color. Another piece, constructed with oil paint and archival vinyl tape on wood, uses a carnival palette balanced by repetition and resembles the serenity of madness tamed. Swaths of line on line would seem to be a riotous tide of color but remains composed. This preeminence of process is evidenced by diligent repetition and obsessive care. Despite, or maybe because of the meditative focus of the work, it is strengthened by an equal awareness of the dark side of fixation, that it-must-be-perfect-ness plaguing obsessive compulsives, and more than a few others.

Wills's works seem to assert that, as in meditation, all is not as calm and still as the peaceful glow from the sitter's face. There are torrents and shadows, meandering thoughts and obsessive tendencies; anyone who has sat still with thoughts for more than a minute or two will tell you that these storms are as common as clouds while only the breath is steady. With its new use for banal materials, the work acknowledges our errant commonalities and with for

nuance. Yes, there is a tumble of color, thoughts, words, lines, but overall, order is maintained. Greenblackorangeblue-whitepinkred are more tranquil when taken in measured spoonfuls, or in this case, the recurrence of long horizontals striped by brisk, repetitive verticals. The tension between exacerbating focus and the ever more powerful serenity of vastness makes the musicality of these abstractions ever so slightly, yet exceptionally, discordant.

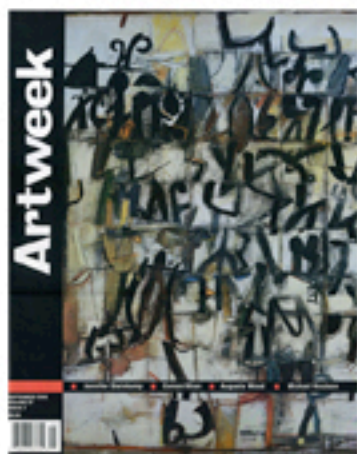
—Annie Buckley

Brian Wills: *Untitled* closed in July at The Happy Lion, Los Angeles.

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Brian Wills at The Happy Lion

Brian Wills uses everyday stuff—dental floss and vinyl tape, wood and varnish—to construct panels of shifting color. Overriding the materials' original purpose, the works are transcendent in the most ordinary sense of the word and, collectively, they surpass the sum of their parts in more discreet ways. Whether it is Wills's curiosity about optics and science (gallery information attests to his interest in how the brain registers color in relation to texture and movement) or the



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