

EDITH NEWHALL, *FOR THE INQUIRER*
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Galleries: They're all jolly good yellows



John Zinsser's "Infantile Experience" (2010)

Every summer, Larry Becker Contemporary Art hits on an esoteric theme for a group show that somehow manages to illuminate shared attributes among its artists that you've never thought of before while simultaneously revealing how very different their work is. It's a neat trick, considering that most of the gallery's artists are painters working in minimal, often geometric, abstraction, if not producing entirely monochromatic canvases.

This time around, the show is "New Moon," a gathering of paintings featuring particular yellows and blacks, and/or combinations of various blacks and yellows. Several artists' paintings were familiar to me from previous one-person shows here - some very long ago - and it was interesting to see them in this new context, with related color and/or shape as the common denominator. The show's installation made me think about artists whom I would not ordinarily pair stylistically or philosophically, and who turn out to get along surprisingly well.

Though smaller than many of his all-black, circular paintings, Quentin Morris' *Untitled (July 2009)* steals the show, at least partly because your eye is immediately pulled toward this black abyss as if by a magnetic force, so much so that I inadvertently bypassed the show's adjacent first painting, near the front window, by Kazimira Rachfal.

It took a force-of-nature yellow to move me on, and that was Tom Benson's astringent, delicious-looking monochromatic painting *Studio (brilliant lemon yellow)*, strategically hung next to Morris' painting, and also dating from 2009.

The show's two busiest works have been hung in close proximity, too. Anna Bogatin's *Narcissus Moon (2015)* - a painting of narrow, seemingly vibrating vertical stripes of white, gray, and brown interspersed with thicker bands of varying yellows - projects more authority than her previous compositions of patterns of tiny dots of pigment, which to me seemed derivative of other artists' works. John Zinsser's tactile *Infantile Experience (2010)*, a netlike composition of uneven thick white brushstrokes on a cadmium yellow background, is the only humorous painting here and a welcome presence.

A pale, monochromatic yellow painting by Marcia Hafif and a deep cadmium one on a shaped canvas by the collaborative team Kocot and Hatton would have made a natural pairing on the wall, as both stem from the artists' series investigating color and its history and symbolism. Instead, they're separated by John Zurier's romantic, brushy painting *Oblaka 5 (2000)*, which looks a little like clouds obscuring a pale-yellow sky.

But wait - Hafif's painting *From the Inventory: Late Roman Painting/Barium Chromate Tint (1996)* does suggest an ancient wall, and her paint application has a transparency similar to Zurier's. And Kocot and Hatton's hard-edged, emblematic *Untitled (Axis series [yellow]sd10December2012)* leads nicely to taut geometric abstractions by Martha Groome (*Yellow Too, 2012*) and Merrill Wagner (*Three Brands of Cadmium Yellow Light, 2008*) and eventually to the show's first work, *The Meadows of Gold (2011)*, a small, lovely geometric painting by Rachfal that hints at an aerial landscape. Seeing it the second time around, and really focusing, I shouldn't have given it short shrift for the Morris.

Larry Becker Contemporary Art, 43 N. 2d St., 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Fridays, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sept. 12, and by appointment. 215-925-5389 or www.artnet.com/lbecker.html. Through Sept. 12.