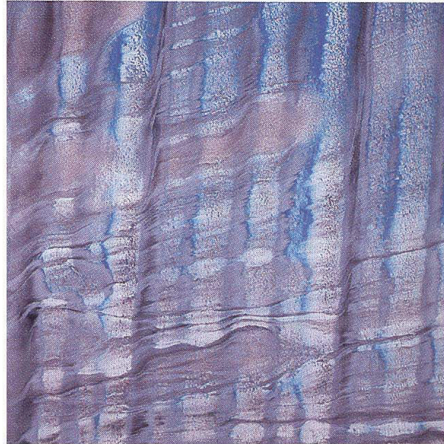


Vicky Colombet: 927-02, 2002, mixed mediums on canvas, 18 by 22 inches; at Evo.



Vicky Colombet at Evo

This was French-born, New York-based artist Vicky Colombet's first solo U.S. show, and it comprised 23 abstract paintings from 2002, all oil, alkyd and wax on canvas, ranging from 8 inches square to 79 by 76 inches. Generally, these compositions, collectively titled "Urban Landscapes," feature blurry geometric configurations in a palette restrained to soft, velvety browns, ochers, grays and cream whites, frequently accented with vibrant shades of blue. Within this framework, several works feature fluid patterns consisting of wide vertical elements linked by short fat horizontal bands, swept with horizontal washes. Delineated by dark shadowy lines, these patterned arrangements resemble chain links or tread marks. Other works feature fewer, less pronounced, tubular bands and amorphous chunks appearing to fade in and out of focus amid striations in muted tones—an effect suggestive of the continuous phases of Polaroid development. These simpler canvases are curiously evocative of Alfred Stieglitz's cloud abstractions, the "Equivalents," as well as of the wiped patternings found in

Gerhard Richter's "Abstract Pictures."

Colombet's technique involves a heat-blending process that combines oil and wax to create the mesmerizing illusion of texture and tangibility, translucence and opacity, integral to this body of work. Juxtaposed with the physical flatness of the works' surfaces, these effects achieve diverse spatial relationships and sensations of movement that also serve to counteract the repetitive aspects of her imagery.

The artist's compositions can evoke aerial views of rivers and desert rock formations as persuasively as they do architectural details or sections of woven textile and synthetic fur viewed under a microscopic lens. In 927-02, the conflation of umber washes and streaks of paint across undulating bands, intermittently highlighted with turquoise, simultaneously suggests rain on sidewalk grating and water rippling over a river bank, while a close-up look at the work's surface reveals webs of threadlike filaments.

By choosing to emphasize textural paraphrases of her surroundings instead of their specific descriptions, Colombet intriguingly manipulates perceptions of place, fluctuating between abstraction and representation, the manmade world and the natural one. In their purposeful ambiguity, these paintings invite—and reward—contemplation.

—Sarah S. King