

The Boston Globe

GALLERIES

An expressionist pioneer at ACME Fine Art

By Cate McQuaid | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JUNE 03, 2014

Jack Tworkov, a pioneer of abstract expressionism, wrote in his journal that he aimed to “paint no Tworkovs.” Although his paintings had swagger, he rejected the artist-as-hero model of the New York School and ultimately found himself spent with ab-ex. He evolved, in the late 1960s and 1970s, into a painter of cool geometric works.

“Jack Tworkov: Constellation of a Picture,” now up at ACME Fine Art, shines a light on the painter’s transitional process from 1965 to 1967. It’s a small show of big works, many of which have never before been exhibited. The paintings are at once audacious — in their almost monolithic directness; in all that they’re letting go of — and restrained.



Jack Tworkov’s “Second Field.”



Tworikov's "SSP #1B."

CONTINUE READING BELOW ▼

They are not yet filled with the murmuring diagonals that characterized the artist's later work (Tworikov died at 82, in 1982). Rather, they home in on brawny, meandering swaths moving over darker fields, like a river cutting through land.

In "Second Field," the swath resembles a section of a baseball diamond, rounding a corner and broadening in yellow gold through a dense field of staccato, red-brown marks. This type of brushwork is an extension of Tworikov's expressionism; it feels nuanced and controlled, alive but contained. Another streak of gold zips across the top, adding rhythm and sway to the piece.

Edges, with their sense of boundary and exposure, imbue these paintings with surprising tenderness. "Sound" could depict the elbow of Cape Cod (Tworikov had a home in Provincetown), mottled ivory yellow against an unwavering black sea.

Jack Tworkov: Constellation of a Picture

ACME Fine Art, 450 Harrison Ave., 617-585-9551.

<http://www.acmefineart.com>

Closing date: June 21

The border between the two wobbles, but the ivory and the black impinging upon it carry equal force. A streak of ocher runs across the bottom, changing the image from topography to a picture of an arm resting on a table, ready to wrestle. Look closely, and you can see Tworkov penciled a grid beneath the pale paint. Grids weren't new to him — his earlier work had featured tight, brushy crosshatching, and also bristly, explosive expressionist grids. Here, it's a whispering substructure, more like those laid into the later work.

In "SSP #1A" and "SSP #1B," white channels angle up the center of sooty black fields. Tworkov touched these contours with red, giving the place where black touches white a kind of soreness, or glow. In another exploration of edges, the channels in these works funnel off the paintings' borders. They seem to be going somewhere, as indeed Tworkov was.