

Athenaeum (Northern Virginia Fine Arts Association)
October 20 – December 4, 2011

Carol Reed is an artist of quiet intensity and consummate craftsmanship. Her images are abstract and non-objective--devoid of easily recognizable subject matter. It allows her to "describe intangible realities--by going to a place where there are no words."

Her abstractions inhabit a world "outside the logical confines of language." And so we pass from the verbal to the visual--to the joyous act of pure seeing--as we examine her finely crafted creations.

Most immediately, we notice the play of various shapes--curves, squares, rectangles, and the like--as they intertwine and intersect. We enjoy as well how these solid black forms are mimicked and echoed by their more faintly realized geometric twins. And, we delight in how all these various forms masterfully shift, reverse, and realign one with another as we move down the wall of exhibited images.

We marvel too at the use of line. How they mimic the black forms and provide an internal energy that seems to make their more solid cousins spin and rotate within the picture plane. This visual gyration is intensified through the visible erasure marks. They not only are a powdery residue of the form's prior position in space, but also an intriguing glimpse into the creative process undertaken by Carol Reed as she visually adjusts all the elements to more perfectly satisfy her artistic vision.

We are surprisingly delighted to perceive the slight--and also more obvious--daubs of color used strategically in some of the works. The color adds a level of depth to the abstract forms and keeps us--the viewer--from becoming too complacent and too confident that we grasp all the options available in Carol Reed's aesthetic toolbox. The same insight is generated by the occasional use of white paper, collaged to the surface; and, the application of patterned motifs carefully and inconspicuously placed on various images.

In short, our journey of pure vision never becomes tiring and the images never become repetitious since each reveals new ways of comprehending the interplay of the various tools--shape, line, color--at the command of Carol Reed.

Refreshed and reinvigorated, our newly achieved powers of perception now both deepen and intensify our formerly quotidian reality. We now appreciate the patterns created by dappled light. We are pleased by the sharp angles of shade created on a bright, sunny day. We even take delight in the massing shapes of our urban landscape and in the descent of a leaf as it lazily and silently drifts in an unpredictable patter to the ground.

We transcend the literal and, like Carol Reed, produce our own visual dynamic--one that did not exist until we created it and which serves only our own personal pleasure.

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