Neil Anderson: Nightlife & The Divided Plane

Neil Anderson's new paintings extend the endeavors of the last exhibit with juxtaposed poetic titles that parallel their abstractions.

Abstract painters apply nomenclature to their paintings at a peril of setting fixed meaning; once named, the image can never go back to an open state of being, to discovery in the same way that the artist created form. Anderson's titles are truly evocative: *Nightlife, Apollo, Aries, Red and Black, Summer, Cardinal, September Song,* (along with the ubiquitous *untitled*). It is almost as if Anderson wants to lead you into a specific narrative - but even these loaded titles are open ended. *Red and Black* could be palette choices or a reference to Stendhal; *Cardinal* could index its brilliant cadmium scarlet, Catholic dignitaries, a compass point; *September Song* like Kurt Weil's tune is perhaps about the end of life. *Summer* seems rooted on the bottom but blossoms into vibrant floral reds and verdant greens on the top panel. *September Song*'s left panel has more vibrant, aggressive images, blossoming with radiant reds and blues; its autumnal right panel seems pulled back, shrunken in contrast, withered and yellowed like a fall harvest in a field. *Apollo* could be the Greek god with his poetic and musical references (and prophecies). *Nightlife*, all purples and lavenders with touches of crisp yellows, feels like a nightclub under siege of black light and Van Gogh's *Night Café*.

Other abstract painters do not name, do not infer meaning. Their paintings are the things themselves; art for art's sake. In the past, Anderson has written about how his work does not involve narrative. Yet the act of naming, one of the activities that Adam did in Paradise, is primal, oneiric. It is a way we navigate the world, much like Anderson's paintings. Words and images make a rebus of the world, carry us away, lead us astray, and induce reverie.

If you look at Anderson's paintings a similar dreamlike process takes hold. You see a complex field of bright, buoyant color divided by an almost Celtic interlace of interstate highways. Roads become cloverleafs, swell horizontally like flooded estuaries. They are seriously comic, taut and springy. Curves seem both organic and geometric at the same time, hues both carbon-based and inorganic, planes both modernist and flat and dryly layered like an ancient fresco.

Such works are not undecisive; they are *inclusive*. This quality of being comprehensive, all-encompassing, this AND that, is like our current experience. Modernism divided, merely believed in one thing, the holy truth of pure essence. That led us to the path of a righteous core but its blinders excluded anything but the dull religion of the flat.

To some the modernist catechism still holds. To others, like Anderson, the search is in the path, the voyage, the discovery. Anderson's works take one on a journey, that like alchemical processes do not adhere to science but involve magic, potions, and the circuitous path toward gold.

Sid Sachs, 2010