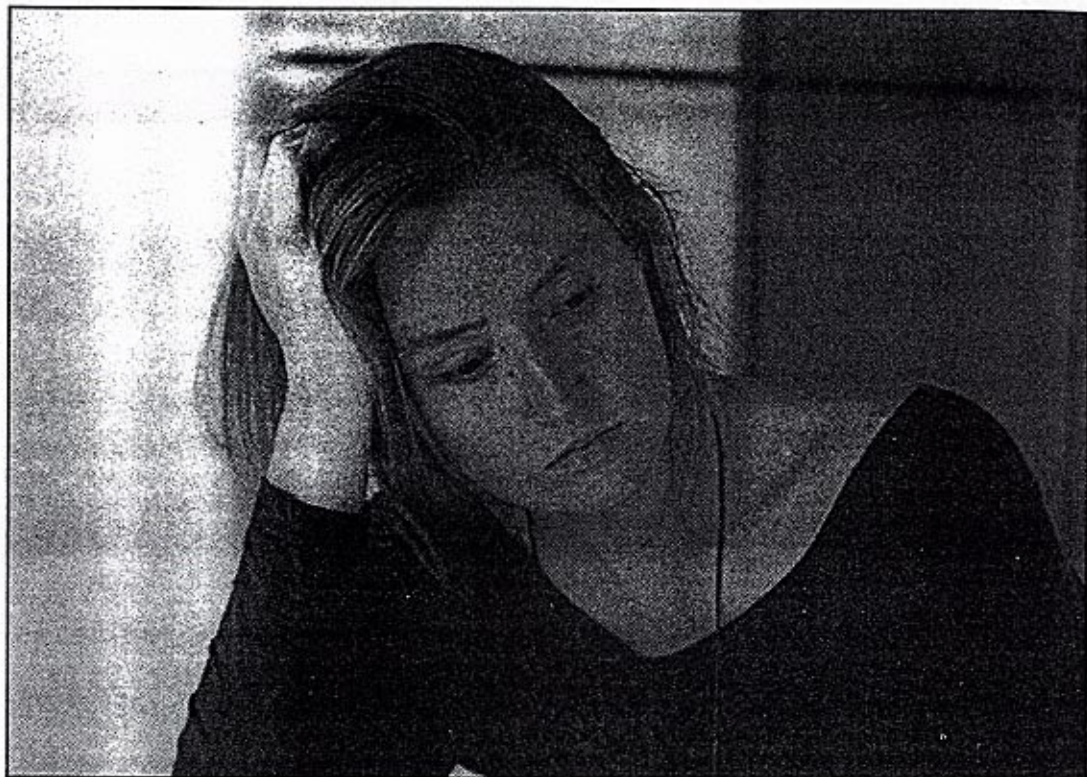


PASSAGES OF LIGHT



HEATHER HUTCHISON *Casts a Romantic Shadow*

NOHRA HAIME GALLERY

Burning with desire to capture a certain Romantic light, 31 year old Heather Hutchison has carved out some interesting turf, cutting across genres from painting to relief to sculpture. Beginning with a minimal tradition, Heather has progressed to a place within a grid system where light can be captured.

As Yves Klein is synonymous with a saturated blue, Hutchison has pursued a wispy, transcendent blue. By pouring wax onto panels of plexiglass, and mounting them on the wall, the work hearkens back to Modern milestones like Donald Judd's boxes and Mark Rothko's ascending horizontal paintings. Further, there is a kinship with process-oriented work such as the poured lead pieces of Richard Serra. Although Hutchison paints the wax on, it is done so in a repetitive manner, up and down, sometimes creating a woven feeling.

In the newest pieces, Hutchison has stripped away some of the wax, creating nebulous negative space through which one can peer into the actual space of the box. This depth is important because it allows the light to come back out, creating subtle shifts in hue.

In looking for metaphors for her work, you might see clouds in a window. An oxymoronic aura surrounds these pieces as geometry and nature meld. The predominate right angles provide an armature for the wax and plexiglass, just as they provide an armature for the passage of light.

Although one can discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the work, it seems more intuitive than associative. The artist is

not enamored with "critical theory that's meant for literature and applied to art. Everyone has their own theory and philosophy. I didn't study art so I didn't have any of that training."

Instead she assisted the artist Joseph Amar, who used wax and lead. Another obvious influence was the work of the late Christopher Wilmarth. "He helped inform the work a lot in the beginning. All the elements he was using, the light that I'm always searching for, he had captured with the glass, steel and acid. He was from Sonoma County and at the time I was living in Marin County.

"Seeing his work was a huge influence. I would like to even go into those materials, but that would be too close for comfort. His color is coming directly from his materials. He's got the dark of the steel and the light of the edge. And when you're using transparent materials colors come from everywhere, which is an element of my work that his work has because of the transparency of the materials.

"Some of these new works came out of 19th century seascapes like Courbet and Corot, their compositions and divisions. Also the colors next to colors as in Giorgio Morandi. There is a Romantic inclination here. I'm not looking at biogenetics, not doing electro-shock on nature."

Subtle, seductive, and tempting to touch, there is a resonance and resilience in these works that is unique. The associative canon that wax has acquired over the ages whispers through these boxes, caressing, as it were, the light that comes through.

JEFF WRIGHT