

## Galleries

## Abstraction is alive and well ... and living in Boston

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SPECIAL TO THE GLOBE

The last few years have seen a refutation of post-modernism, which holds that everything important has been done, so why keep reworking old ground? Plenty of artists continue to see the expansion of modernist ideas as fertile territory; many explore the possibilities of abstraction, which has been at the core of 20th-century achievement.

That abstraction is alive and well, and that it touches artists in all age groups, is evident in several exhibits around town. Three generations of area artists are represented, from octogenarian Gyorgy Kepes to such mid-career painters as Natalie Alper and Domingo Barreres to baby-boomer Louis Risoli.

Louis Risoli is well known to Boston audiences. He's been showing here since 1981, with the Stax Gallery and then the Zoe Gallery, both of which have closed. Risoli is now represented by Gallery NAGA, where he is having his first solo.

The show includes paintings of varied sizes: four skinny columns, one rectangle and three small canvases. All follow Risoli's trademark layering of vibrant pigment formed into loosely geometric, maze-like, and linear designs. A change in these works is a thinning of the paint with generous amounts of glossy medium, which renders the layers more transparent and lustrous.

Like many abstract painters Risoli is inspired by science. Although

phrases like Big Bang theory, cosmology, or particle physics may come to mind when we look at his circular patterns, with their sense of a central, explosive force, or his squiggly, fragmented shapes, which seem like life observed under a microscope, Risoli's is not a literal translation of scientific phenomenon, but an intuitive expression of the elemental world.

Painted wet on wet, and especially with the added gloss, Risoli's surfaces highlight paint's sensual nature; color seems to slither through space, barely contained by the "membranes" (darker outlines comprised of previous layers) which separate one jostling form from another. NAGA has hung the paintings with plenty of space around them, allowing these pulsating works to breathe. The installation underscores Risoli's highly object oriented form of painting; some of these works project half a foot from the wall. Painted along the sides, they take on a sculptural presence. This is especially true in the totemic "Venus," where the fleshy pink tones suggest Risoli is alluding to something earthbound as well as planetary.

That abstraction may simultaneously allude to the real and metaphysical worlds is also apparent in a show called "Regarding Abstraction" at the Howard Yezerski Gallery. All seven artists, whose ages range from the 30s to the 80s, are represented by this gallery, and while they take very different approaches to ab-



Louis Risoli's "Parallel Heaven."