

TOD WIZON

EARL McGRATH GALLERY

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Tod Wizon's paintings palpably suggest a presence that is never fully realized or described. Earlier paintings by the artist, which strongly evoked landscape, were assembled from puzzle-like shapes of color. For the past several years, those shapes have dissolved into discrete brush marks which, layered over one another, create dense beds of activity that veer between landscape and pure abstraction. The artist's ability to toggle back and forth between the two, without describing either, catapults these paintings into the realm of the metaphysical, where perception is more felt than known.

These 18 modestly sized works were painted in acrylic, which Wizon employs with extreme delicacy. Each brush mark, in a dazzlingly pure hue, is precisely placed on the canvas. The first few layers meld to provide a ground for subsequent marks. The gestures are various—some seem thick, almost packed with paint; some glazed, mere traces of line—but Wizon's surfaces are always smooth and shiny.

The paintings are so saturated with color that they become almost neutral: color is unmoored from its connection to pigment, instead becoming light, shadow, atmosphere, and entity. In *Carnival Wind*, pale, cloud-like passages form ghostly striations across

the small canvas, revealing a tumult of color beneath. Linked by the painting's title, the warm earthy tones become "carnival," the cool gray that covers them "wind." It is not a literal transposition; rather, the color visually assumes the characteristics that carnivals or winds metaphorically possess: noise, activity, celebration; the ability to disperse clouds, to clarify. Ultimately, light is the presence that permeates these paintings. For Wizon, light, like color, becomes a visual entity with metaphorical equivalents in the world, but it is not limited in definition to those equivalents. In *Sundown Windows*, light is made manifest in bright yellow oblongs, the reflective glint of sun on glass. The circle of light that is *Bright Eye* irradiates the canvas, bathing the figure-like fragments of color surrounding it. Looking into its lime-green center, one senses the mystical presence of these paintings; the light becomes almost holy. Wizon's paintings are beautiful mediations that use paint as a means of inquiry into the nature of being. He follows an eccentric path, toeing the line between what is seen and what is felt. —*Elisabeth Condon*