

ART

NEW ENGLAND



Louis Risoli—*Venus*

Stux Gallery/Boston
Louis Risoli

Contemplating the scintillant, mutating canvases of Louis Risoli reminds me of watching a certain kind of animated film, involving the frame-by-frame pixilation of bright geometries and quickly displaced images. The jittery shifts of content and intent from painting to painting leave the overloaded retina with the afterfeel of a psychedelic journey.

Risoli has moved through phases of pattern painting, done in rich and intuitive strokes; some of his tiny canvases have been gems in this vein. Probably his best-known work is that of the patterned musculature period, which went from nearly abstract to almost realistic torsos, glowing and rough, with a mosaic and/or tile structuring that at times cleverly echoed the imagined delts and quads of the well-toned body, as well as the stripes and colors of the sportily summer-clad. This style, which one could have imagined Risoli continuing to explore for some time, created at its best

a tense play between geometry and reality. The headless anonymity of many of these figures combines with the fragmented mosaic look to create a sense of historical depth—even if it's recent history.

This show displays Risoli in the midst of a new evolution. He's gone back to the language of brightly colored geometries, but these now are subject matter with drama and attitude. These are patterns come unstuck and alive, and have more joyous vigor than the human figures, which sometimes felt a bit imprisoned in their own design.

Though one feels their overall energy and intention, a few of the canvases in this show do not come alive, as though they are not quite the right frames singled out from the unrolling film.

However, the largest piece in the show is also one of the best things this artist has done. Titled *Power to the People* (why? Risoli is one of the true obscurantists when it comes to titles), it brings the same tension between design and subject matter that the artist formerly brought between body and geometry, but on a new, unfettered level. There's a concentration and depth here that gives one the feeling that all of the artist's previous work lies behind it, as background, as springboard.

On top of the vivid zig-zags and swooping stripes of yellow, brown, black, white, and rose, one sees a curious thing: a nearly alchemical symbol of bare canvas showing through. Scrawled across the entire 6 x 10' piece, it seems paradoxically an overlay, almost like a new kind of signature. Certainly, as such, it seems an emblem of a new kind of freedom and confidence.

—Thomas Frick