



Shona Macdonald: *Inscape: Mountains*, 2004, gouache, acrylic and oil on MDF, diptych, 43 by 103 inches overall; at Skestos Gabriele.

## CHICAGO

### Shona Macdonald at the Chicago Cultural Center and Skestos Gabriele

Shona Macdonald's ethereal landscapes are collectively titled "Inscapes," a term coined by the British poet Gerard Manley Hopkins to describe inner landscapes of the mind. Macdonald's "Inscapes" are equally poetic. The artist traces images from topographical maps and photographs (usually geographical in nature), manipulates the results in various ways, then adds drawn elements related to her travels and memories of her native Scotland. In this way she creates resonant geographies both real and imagined.

Although Macdonald is known primarily for her drawings, two recent exhibitions explored the breadth of her activities. About a dozen works on paper (executed in pencil, silverpoint and gouache) were on view at the Chicago Cultural Center; shown at Skestos Gabriele were five large paintings made up of layers of gouache, acrylic and oil. In each, islands, mountain ranges and bits of greenery and foliage unravel into elemental shapes and fractals, onto which the artist overlays her own markings.

For example, in three formally related drawings, fragments of either branches, shorelines or waterways are transformed into rhythmic cells, spirals and radials that combine drawn topographical referents with painted pools of lavender, blue and aqua. Several drawings derived from islands similarly reconfigure snippets of land masses into irregular, all-over patterns that merge bold graphics, painterly flourishes and faint interconnecting lines.

Macdonald is a nuanced drafts-person who also possesses a flair for the fantastic, creating a balance—and tension—between the borrowed representational

elements and her abstract, fabricated forms. The same holds true of her paintings, which she composes with equal finesse despite the shift to a larger scale. (Most of them measure 52 by 90 inches.) Here, she also proves herself to be a skilled colorist, as in the vibrant, particularly abstract *Inscape: Isles* (2004-05), a study in blues; and in the serene, almost ghostly *Inscape: Mountains* (2004), a sprawling range of rising peaks bathed in subdued purples and pale greens. Layers of paint undergo a kind of chemical reaction that adds texture to the works' otherwise flat surfaces, while pointing to the artificiality of her landscapes' construction.

Both the drawings and paintings eschew a singular vantage point. The shifting perspectives disorient the viewer and serve as metaphors for displacement and wanderlust. Not unlike those in the paintings of Julie Mehretu, Macdonald's invented forms become a personal language that speaks of memory, home and longing—even for a place that is more notional than not—as well as to contemporary narratives of migration and globalization. Yet Macdonald's "Inscapes" are indisputably her own, ambiguous mappings traversed by the mind.

—Susan Snodgrass

## DALLAS

### John Pomara at the Dallas Center for Contemporary Art

Although reminiscent of Peter Halley's paintings of the 1980s, which were intended to represent social phenomena of late capitalism, John Pomara's abstract paintings are more manifestly referential.

They reflect the increasingly sophisticated—and increasingly cold—schematization of science and technology in today's world. Pomara's paintings are characterized by a sense of dynamism and