

PARIS

Alix Le Meleder at Galerie Zurcher

Alix Le Meleder paints gestural abstractions made with a slap of her brush on the center right side of a primed canvas, adjacent to the edge. She then rotates the canvas a quarter turn and repeats this gesture, going around all four sides, never working in any other way. This process, repeated over and over again, results in predominantly white canvases with four built-up, blotchy areas of oil paint, each a little larger than a hand, equidistant from one another and from the corners and center of the canvas.

The paintings each take up to two months to make, though several may be worked on during a given period. The artist has told me that she works six days a week in the studio and everything that happens during that time is in the paintings. On one level, then, they are about marking lived moments, like the work of Hanne Darboven and On Kawara, except Le Meleder has seen fit to operate within the idiom of gestural abstraction.

Looking at rooms full of these untitled canvases, as in the artist's most recent exhibition at Galerie Zurcher of works from 2002 to '04, uninitiated viewers might

imagine that they were looking at the same painting repeated with slight variations in size. (Six of the works are about 6½ feet square, two measure around 5 feet, 9 inches per side, two others are roughly 2½ feet square and there was one triptych involving three roughly 2-foot-square panels.) As for the paint, the color red predominates, though upon close inspection one detects many thin layers of blue, yellow and purple, and a toothy impasto at the edges of the marks. In addition, spray off the brushstrokes creates a semi-illusionistic space that also gives each of the four built-up paint passages its own aura. This atmosphere soothes the assertive whiteness of the canvas and grounds the painted marks.

In one of the 6½-foot works,

the splotches seem to have gotten smaller as the painting progressed. The painting's history is laid out from the edges of blue and yellow to the final dusky reds, all of which one can examine like tree rings. It is also notable that each individual painted area functions as its own painting within the whole.

Le Meleder's work has been described by the French art critic Michel Bulteau as Taoist, and one can certainly see connections to Eastern thought in her apparent concerns with the unity of opposites: velocity vs. meditateness, organic forms (her painted mark) vs. pure geometry (the white square), fragment (each mark sufficient unto itself) vs. whole (the entirety of the canvas) and sequentiality vs. stasis.

Le Meleder's edifying paintings seem to demonstrate life as a kind of metronome, with many subtle but irreversible changes occurring at every click.

—Joe Fyfe

Alix Le Meleder: Two untitled oil-on-canvas paintings, 2002-04; at Galerie Zurcher.

