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# Is abstract painting regaining its popularity?

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Inquirer Art Critic

Abstract painting is re-emerging from the shadows. It did not die in the 1960s, as many believe, but just languished for a time. Slowly now, we begin to realize that abstract painting is not only alive but thriving again — and it has a new look. An exhibit at the Susan Montezinos Gallery is one of the few early-season local events to spotlight such post-minimal abstract painting and its special attributes.

Noteworthy among these traits: the new abstract paintings may resemble objects — sculptural objects. This influence is not surprising, since sculpture flourished during abstract

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painting's dry spell. New abstract paintings are more complex than abstraction used to be. Moreover, they emphasize the way the various elements of form are brought together in each work.

The Montezinos show features 15 New York artists ranging in age from 29 to 58.

Dublin-born Sean Scully, a "composer in paint" who sets the tone for the show with quiet and controlled understatement, offers perhaps the most memorable work on view. His striped and monochromatic picture

has emotional impact, yet is austere in format. It gives the lie to the argument that hard-line abstraction is going nowhere. Denise Green's approach is less object-oriented than many, reflecting her interest in the science of signs and in the possible meanings these might have. David Reed's richly colorful work is a solid addition, as is Jim de Woody's jaunty, clear-eyed painting.

Another colorist who excels in his medium is Michael Goldberg. His work is capable of luminous depths, leading some observers to read "abstract landscape" into it.

Getting back to the artists who care about paintings as objects: Ted Stamm's work is rigorous, obsessive, and he struggles to refine his images. Merrill Wagner's offbeat use of oil paint applied to slate is sophisticated, subtle. Lynn Umlauf reaches for powerful presence in a work made of unstretched canvas, wherein color, shape and three dimensions are of equal importance. Also making their presence felt here are Peggy Cyphers, John Ford, Jacob El Hanani, Ron Janowich, Cathy Lee, Linda Levit and Mark Williams. This is a show that grows on you.

Susan Montezinos Gallery, 1628 Pine St. (735-3235) is open Tuesday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Prices are \$600 and up. The exhibit runs to Oct. 6.



"Transition to Black and White," an oil by Charles Gaffney, at Gross McCleot

Steve Jaffe, a contemporary of area realists Larry Day, Edith Neff and Sidney Goodman, is, like those artists