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Frank Haines

Lisa Cooley Fine Art

Rosalind Krauss dubbed the grid “what art looks like when it turns its back on nature.” In his recent exhibition, “Form is the Graveyard of Consciousness,” Lisa Cooley, Frank Haines’ sculptural and drawn grids reflected the messy geometry of the natural world. Blossoming on wood like newborn stalagmites, or dropping with mossy bumps of shellac, they were like reclaimed ruins from a modernist shipwreck. In some works the grid was more literal, a revealed infrastructure cheerfully acknowledging its debt to Sol Lewitt, as in one piece, a painted white X.

Along with the grid, triangles dominated the space. The focal point was an inverted triangle made of latticed painted wood that hovered above another resting on the floor. The negative space between their apexes seemed magnetically charged. In another work, an elongated pyramid sat regally atop the wooden shelf. Ambient music composed by Haines during a recent stay in Vienna played throughout the gallery and included moment when three notes formed an aural geometry.

Paintings on paper with dark glossy surfaces were lovely when compositionally full but cryptic when they listed ambiguous symbols. Haines speaks of his work as a conduit for an elusive energy force derived from disciplines that range from alchemy to the occult. When he attempts to depict this too literally, however, the work can suffer. Haines is at his best when he coaxes materials into beguiling forms that transcend a need for explanation.

-Tamsen Green