

## Lydia Dona

at L.A. LOUVER, 23 September–21 October

In the exhibition "Occupants Without Surface in the Reflex of Paradox," Lydia Dona's seven large-scale paintings display Apollonian chaos while propounding a cool intellectualism that suggests the absence of all reference to the body. Dona uses a lexicon of marks to manipulate her ideas among the canvases, reexamining the visual language of modernist abstraction from within the paradigm of abstract painting.

The expansive surface of each canvas is mapped with a variety of marks: shiny enamel drips, matte acrylic ground, scumbled oil, mechanical diagrams, and pencilled grids. Repulsive but curious, the paintings reflect both the dulled colors of institutional walls and the vivid hues of cheap beauty aids. The fragmentary patterns repeated throughout resist a decorative interpretation through their tasteless color and abrupt collisions. No one element of the paintings is allowed to come to fruition; each portion obscures the next. The marks are dry, matter-of-fact communications that interrupt whatever narrative tendency they may otherwise have.

Like a cheesy video-transition effect, two triangles of robin's-egg blue cut across a honeycomb pattern and a patch of mechanical diagrams in *Planes of Projection, Fields of Desire* (all works, 1995). The ovals that are central to several of the paintings suggest empty mirrors or a video-wipe that reveals a blank screen. Other paintings are skeletally constructed around parallel diagonal lines which run like tracks across the surface of the canvas. The ovals and tracks are surrounded by a smorgasbord of marks, which through calculation and repetition are symbolic of the process of painting. Just enough pattern is set up within each section to create an expectation which is then broken. As if making a joke of formal logic, the single octagon in *Occupants Without Surface in the Blue Reflex of Paradox* slips down from a section of honeycomb, lining up within a track formed from parallel diagonals. Enamel drips in *Movement Image and the White Holes of Multiplicity* run vertically upward. Dona teases the fluidity of the paint and the static nature of its support, dislocating gravity and removing the immediacy of the painting process from the viewer's perception.

Dona has hung her paintings close together on two adjoining walls of the gallery, leaving the opposite walls bare, using the gallery's architecture to juxtapose emptiness with fullness. The paintings in turn frustrate the desire to turn away from emptiness with the spare definition of their cen-

tral images. Crawling over the surfaces of the paintings, from their Spartan centers to their elaborately divided peripheries, marks proliferate into minuscule increments. In *False and Real Gray Matter and the Projection of Liquidity*, dots that fill quadrilateral divisions become picayune at their corners, as if clumsily delineating infinity as they approach the canvas' boundaries. If a viewer stands in the far corner of the room with all seven paintings in view, areas that looked fragmented and arbitrary up close become a web of information. Honeycomb to honeycomb, shiny drip section to shiny drip section, circuits are suggested between the fragments of the various images rather than within a single image.

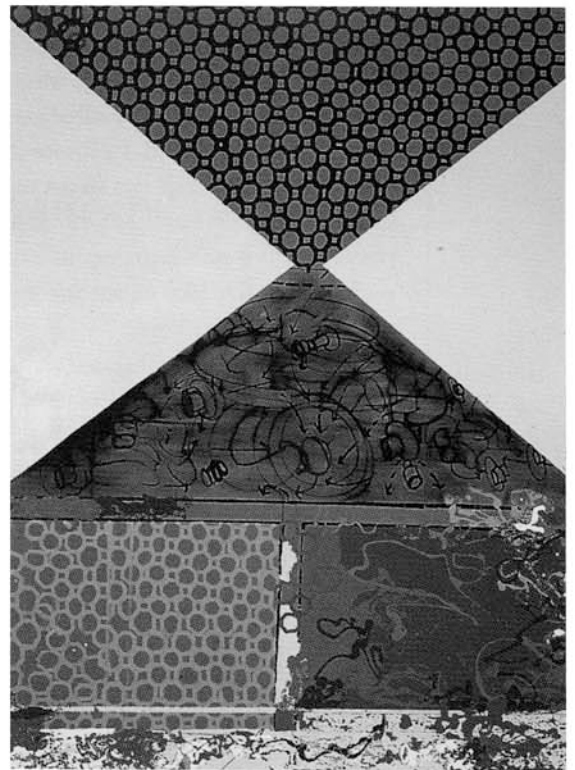
Dona titles her work with quotes from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. Due to the prevailing hierarchy of text over image and experience in contemporary art theory, there is a danger that these linguistic references are antithetical to Deleuze and Guattari's anarchistic intentions of debunking language. Nevertheless, the abstract nature of these combinations of words, whose meanings remain unclear, lope along beside the paintings, never quite intersecting with them. In this way, fragmentation and reconjugation expand the world of experience in Dona's paintings. Similar to Gerhard Richter's insistently optical abstractions of the nineteen eighties, Dona's paintings address both our intellect and our gut, engaging a model of multiplicity. The cool methodology of her painting is countered by an irrepressibly organic system of proliferation: The ovals become membranes, and the webs of marks create a nervous reaction that is once again corporeal, but congealed at the edges.

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Ingrid Calame is an artist who lives and works in Los Angeles.

# Art issues.

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Lydia Dona  
*Planes of Projection, Fields of Desire*, 1995  
Oil, acrylic, and sign paint  
on canvas  
84" x 84"