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Haiku Reviews: Sven Lukin

Sven Lukin's significant role in postwar American abstraction is becoming more and more widely recognized—or re-recognized. When he emerged in the early 1960s with his masterfully conceived and intricately constructed shaped canvases, Lukin, along with peers such as Charles Hinman and Richard Smith, was hailed for crucially expanding “hard-edge” abstraction, proposing a painted presence that metastasized into sculpture. Painting and sculpture hybridize as a matter of course today, but it blew people's minds back then—especially because Lukin et. al. did it so imaginatively, so persuasively, so handsomely, so well. A half-dozen shaped canvases that helped make Lukin's reputation show here what all the fuss was about: not just the fact of the wall-to-floor connection, but the powerful, sensuous, and often funny shapes and weird palette, balancing luminous hues with shades of gray, he commanded with such authority. Nine works from the past decade show Lukin ever dedicated to the painting-as-thing aesthetic, allowing himself more frivolity without losing his aesthetic oomph. Especially engaging are several paintings made on burlap stretched irregularly over what seem to be branches; these have a curious but genial drawing-in-space presence. (Gary Snyder, 529 West 20th St., NY; thru June 30. www.garysnyderart.com)

Peter Frank



San Diego, 1966, acrylic on canvas and wood construction, 72 ¼ x 76 x 72"