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Vicky Colombet at Haim Chanin

The lyrical, reductive paintings of French-born, New York-based artist Vicky Colombet often offer exciting abstract passages that remind us of

Agnes Martin and Brice Marden, as critic Nena Tsouti-Schillinger points out in her catalogue essay. It is not, however, that Colombet's work is derivative, rather, it exists within a broad dialogue of nonobjective painting that seeks a quiet yet powerful effect. The subtlety of the near-monochromatic colors and simple forms in Colombet's art make for convincing abstract paintings; interestingly, at the same time the artist intimates the contours of an implied landscape. Mostly working with an abstract vocabulary that can, at times, suggest the course of nature, Colombet creates symbolic images



Vicky Colombet: *From the Winds 11-06-04*, 2004, oil, alkyd, wax on canvas, 78 inches square; at Haim Chanin.

effects. Her implicit imagery is writ large: the work is 78 inches square. The painting's essentially structureless composition contrasts sharply with *Summer Day 11-09-04*, a gridded oil, alkyd and wax on canvas, 76 inches square. Here, the grid is built up with blue verticals and black horizontal stripes, resulting in a more clearly articulated abstract structure. Again, the title references a moment in nature, but the grid itself, something more easily found in culture than nature, may allude to architecture or a construction of some sort.

In *Wind & Snow 11-10-04*, Colombet brilliantly evokes a white expanse of snow stirred up by wind. Another large, square canvas, the work consists of patches of white divided by regular striations of light brown, the central area resembling a windswept plateau. Despite the austerity of the almost Rymanesque color scheme, Colombet's statement remains complex. She is at her best when she straddles abstraction and natural reference, working from a minimalist concept but refusing to paint a purely abstract painting. —Jonathan Goodman