



Bradley Harms

NEWZONES GALLERY OF CONTEMPORARY ART, CALGARY

These days, manipulating a surface with paint, especially when constructing an image with repeating elements, often means inviting the assumption that the work was created digitally. This is especially true of the recent paintings by Bradley Harms in his show "Analog."

Harms enjoys mimicking the look of digital art; however, he eschews machine techniques. Instead, he hand-applies delicately modulated lines that vary in thickness from the width of a pen line to that of a medium-sized brush. Each line begins at the edge of the stretched canvas, then runs, wobbles, arcs, overlaps and finally dips over the opposite edge. By extending these lines past the surface of the painting and beyond the viewer's visual awareness, Harms hints they might continue endlessly.

On this striped background he places discs of flat colour in various blues, greens, greys and blacks. When discs sit within larger discs they take on a haloed appearance. Single discs often function as oculi, admitting views into a dark, striped void. Peering through Harms's artistic microscope, or telescope, reveals only more lines—not the watery-wavy lines of the surface, but lines gathering into systematic networks. It's a continual dualism, flipping between surface assertion and spatial invitation.

The stylized works can be described as neo-mannerist. Harms has re-evaluated painting in light of the artist's current freedom from postmodern theory strictures and positioning under the flickering light of digital awareness. The paintings are nearly impossible to look at without considering digital means, and this is exactly what Harms wants: to play upon our expectations. The analog qualities, the variables found in the hand-painted lines, separate the paintings from works actually done with electronic technology. They exemplify a fascinating turn of visual phrase that is a counterpoint to the numerous artists propagating painterly appearances with digital technology. **CHRISTOPHER WILLARD**