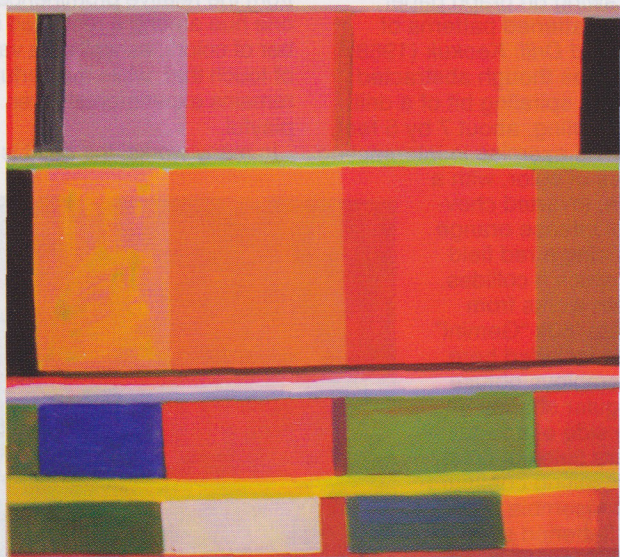


rows, Whitney tends to concentrate together a few blocks of nearly identical value and only subtly varying hues—reds and reddish oranges, say, in *Queen of Hearts*, and yellows and light oranges in *High Yellow* (both 54 by 60 inches); the latter fairly basks in its own radiance. These areas might march along in a single row, or fall into two or three rows, like a spreading puddle of chroma. The dominant feeling of the work is here established, but as if internally generated rather than imposed. And where, as in the ultra-brushy pink block at the center of one jewel-like (12-inch-square) untitled piece, the artist



Stanley Whitney: *Queen of Hearts*, 2004, oil on linen, 54 by 60 inches; at Esso.

lets loose, it feels like a radical intrusion indeed in the steady unfolding of the whole.

Whitney's paintings are a slow read, yielding small surprises that are a delight to anyone who loves the medium. In the large work *The Underside of the Sky* (72 inches square), for example, a tricolor dividing strip consists of a bright, festive pink, white and blue quite out of keeping with the subdued tones of the surrounding blocks; a hazy window of pale blue, lightly brushed directly on the primed surface, opens a chink in a top corner. I'm especially fond of the artist's sparing use of a lone block of dull lavender, which makes occasional appearances, for example in *Queen of Hearts* and *High Yellow*. That patch feels stubbornly idiosyncratic, on a mission to complicate a palette already enriched by Whitney's stamp of serene relativity.

—Faye Hirsch

Suzanne McClelland at Larissa Goldston

The resourceful Suzanne McClelland continues to instigate a tussle between the pictorial and the linguistic. The dainty curls of *Bitch* (2005, all paintings acrylic, oil and pastel on linen), wispy in black pastel and thinned to a gritty haze, are the exquisite foil for a badass arabesque, in glaring white with a spotty copper glaze. Brushy, animated lettering spells the title in aluminum and more white. The painting is literally logocentric, as the whole thing revolves around the emphatic dot over the "i."

a central, sooty smudge. And like a cartoon echo or moan of pleasure, rings emanate from an undulating, lipstick-red "O" across a hot yellow ground in *OOO* (for Oprah), 2003, embellished by jazzily decorated donut shapes and trimmed with a colorless fur boa.

Unorthodox materials are celebrated further in *OOO* (for Mary Kelly), 2005. The Los Angeles-based feminist/conceptualist, in her 1970s project *Post-Partum Document*, daily annotated then exhibited her infant son's soiled diaper liners; in McClelland's

ode, egg-shaped spots of brown mold sparsely dot a length of linen pinned to the wall, flanked by blue-and-gold ribbons. The 9-by-8-foot *Stud* (2005) is a curtain of white velvet, silk and linen swatches upon which the clumsily-scrawled title is inkjet-printed in various sizes and angles, becoming pattern. Within the shapes forming the letters are images of rocket launches with their attendant phallic plumes of smoke and pictures of men pointing. "STUD" also runs down the left side in blocky gray capitals, like a varsity banner. Blue and white ribbons and bows fleck the surface, which is drizzled over with glazey blue acrylic applied with a honey-dripper or squirt bottle. The artist's erstwhile, gutsy command of her materials is tentative here, but her penetrating logophilia saves the day.

—Stephen Maine

Richard Tsao at Chambers

Of Chinese parentage and raised in Thailand, Richard Tsao moved to New York in the early 1970s as an aspiring adolescent artist and has been exhibiting in Italy, New York and, more recently, Thailand for over 15 years. For this show he deployed what has become a signature series of small, contemplative paintings saturated with intense color. With their relative isolation and dramatic lighting, the paintings



Suzanne McClelland: *OOO* (for Oprah), 2003, acrylic, oil and pastel on linen, 48 by 38 inches; at Larissa Goldston.

exemplify a tradition of abstraction sufficiently meditative for a devotional reading, like Stations of the Cross. Tsao called this exhibition "Flood," a reference to the vivid pools of paint in his Brooklyn studio or, conceivably, to the seasonal flooding that he experienced as a child in Southeast Asia.

The surfaces of Tsao's paintings are rich with water-based pigment, their skins variously eroded and elsewhere built up with marble dust and the matte medium he uses as a binder. As the medium extends the integrity of the pigment, he manipulates it to achieve substrata and surfaces that range from a glazed appearance or deepening craquelure to the look of pollen, each seductive in its own right. The nearly square *Red Desert* (13 by 14 inches; 2004) resembles a glazed ceramic tile, its gleaming crimson surface slightly inflected with studio debris; both palette and title invite reference to Antonioni's first film in color. While the piece is relatively low in relief, small passages of dried medium expand beyond the painting's edge. Tsao also explores red pigment in the 29-by-27-inch *Mooncake* (2001), its surface pitted and scored like some lunar plain. A painting of the same size and year, *Moonlight*, is infested with fissures, the surface modulating from silvery rose to blue; it suggests topography in an infrared aerial view.