

As the title suggests, *post-hypnotic* extends itself beyond a mere enjoyment of dazzling optical effects. And equally important, these recent works continue to explore the issues of engaged viewing that were so significant in American and European art more than thirty years ago. Through the thirty-seven works assembled here, the exhibition addresses current concerns in terms of where we are in the history of American painting and also in terms of what the basic spectacle of painting can mean in a contemporary world.

Practically speaking, *post-hypnotic* brings together recent works by twenty-eight contemporary artists living in the United States, Switzerland, England and Japan who investigate perceptual phenomenon through pulsating patterns, unexpected afterimages, vibrant illusionistic space, and other sensations often associated with altered states. Individually the works are generous and inviting, offering the viewer the opportunity to literally engage with the work and demand undivided attention. Collectively they make pointed references to a time when Op art was the movement of the moment and the artists associated with that style brought the issues of painting and seeing to the forefront.

But more than a nostalgic reiteration of those mindboggling landmarks of the 1960s, these recent works look to the unfinished business of Op art and explore a potential that was never quite realized in its time. These more recent investigations seem to pick up where many of their distant relatives left off and push determinedly past sentimental glamour into contemporary visual experience. Although more than thirty years stand firmly between the paintings included in this exhibition and the glory days of the Op art movement, their affinities extend well beyond a shimmering surface, yet contrast in intent and content.



Aaron Parazette, "February," 1997, oil enamel on canvas.

As *post-hypnotic's* most recent antecedent, Op art was in the mid 1960s the self-proclaimed and self-conscious utopian wave of the future. Essentially the concern of painters and graphic artists, Op art was characterized by a mechanistic precision, experimental optics and radiant afterimages. The best works of the period seemed determined to avoid anything vaguely resembling narrative content, and instead focused on how unstable and unexpected the very act of looking could be. Op art was an experiment totally of its own time, although diligent attempts were made to push a history for the work that extended back as far as the medieval book of Lindisfarne and Byzantine mosaics. As '60s counterculture explored the liberating potential of Eastern mandalas, hallucinogens, and psychedelics, Op art seemed to be the perfect expression of its age.

But what many people remember so distinctly about Op art is how brief the phenomenon was, as Op became "pop" and the very qualities that distinguished the artworks were quickly absorbed into the most mundane