

ARTFORUM

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Stanford Brent Ingber Gallery

In his first solo show, Stanford Brent revealed himself to be a painter very much at home in the arena that exists between abstraction and representation, an arena filled with tantalizing promises as well as dangerous pitfalls. The promises it proffers are of the inestimable sort, the sort that contain (for those talented enough to realize it) the gift of true expression, while the pitfalls that await artist and viewer alike are usually of the prosaic kind, such as the dangers of sliding into trite, ho-hum expressionism. Some measure of Brent's admirable ability to deliver on the promises while gingerly sidestepping the pitfalls can be gleaned from the paintings of window views and interiors done during his stay in Paris in 1984-85. Inspired by the scenes around him, the artist turns observation into rumination through his evocative approach

toward form. Working in a somewhat reductive mode, whereby only the essence of appearances is retained, he loads his colors and shapes with latent meaning.

This aspect of Brent's work is more fully developed in the recent group of paintings of nocturnal skies, where ideas and feelings seem to float to the fore from the depths of each composition. These are paintings that give of themselves in a quiet but deliberate fashion. In *Dream Night*, 1986, content arises from the way in which Brent makes abstract and representational elements work together through contrast. For instance, the full moon located in the painting's upper left quadrant conceptually anchors the image in the real world, causing the abstract passage to its right—a scaffold of scumbled lines and planes—to be read emblematically as fluttery layers of advancing clouds. For the viewer, what follows are vivid sensations of the inevitable passage of time, and contemplation of the mutable character of place.

—RONNY COHEN