

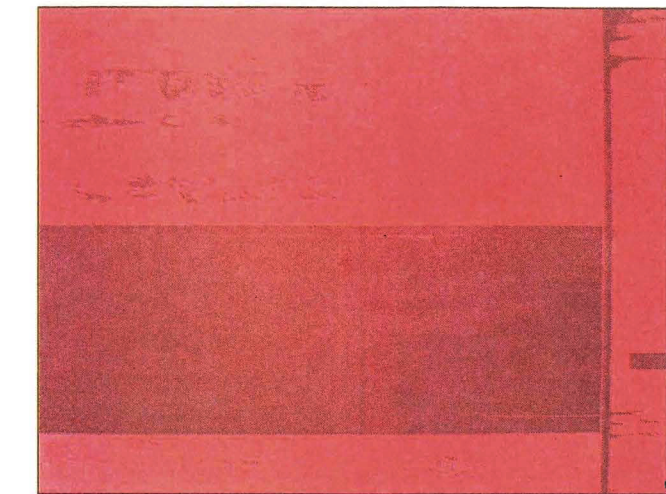
Artistic views expressed in tones and tints of red

Red is for Valentine cards and stop signs, not for monochromatic paintings. Or at least that's what I thought until I saw "To Be Looked at ..., Close to ..." [Summer Love]," a gathering of all-red paintings by Anna Bogatin, Dove Bradshaw, Marcia Hafif, Kocot and Hatton, Joseph Mariani, Jon Poblador, Steve Riedell, Lars Strandh, Merrill Wagner, Mark Williams, and John Zinsser.

I've never seen a show composed exclusively of all-red paintings at any gallery at any time of year — and I certainly wouldn't have expected to see one at Larry Becker Contemporary Art, a gallery that has long favored minimal, monochromatic canvases of white, black, and suggestive blues, grays, yellows, browns, and greens.

But this curiously titled show (borrowed from the even longer and more enigmatic title of a 1916 work by Marcel Duchamp) easily proves that in the right artist's hands (such as Mark Rothko's), a painting composed entirely of red can be just as mysterious, nuanced, or alluring as one of any other color. It's interesting to see how many variations of red exist so harmoniously in one room, too — I'd have expected clashes everywhere.

The show's most hypnotic work is Bradshaw's tiny painting *Full*, which she made in 1991 and completed this year. A Chinese red painting whose original time-darkened layers of red pigment and varnish are revealed at its outer edges, it pulls your eye in, like a



"Untitled (Red Painting)," by Mark Williams, part of the display of monochromatic works at Larry Becker Contemporary Art.

window to a cellar, though it clearly projects outward from the wall and looks as much like an object as it does a painting.

A rectangle and a vertical line of carmine red intersect a vivid cherry-red field in Williams' *Untitled (Red Painting)*, the show's largest piece and the one that most clearly demonstrates the voltage that high-key reds can deliver (wearers of red lipstick know this well). Zinsser's *German Edition* (2010) also pairs two reds — thick, squiggly strokes of orange red atop a ruby-red background — to visceral effect.

At the opposite end of the red spectrum are Wagner's commanding *Arrow* (2012), a geometric wall construction of found steel painted with a dark reddish brown-colored rust-preventive paint, and Steve Riedell's *Folded-Over Painting (Red) (#2)* (2011),



"Arrow," a found-steel construction by Merrill Wagner on display at Larry Becker Contemporary Art.

which looks like oxblood polished leather stapled to stretchers. The reds and surface textures of both works suggest reflections on the passage of time.

I left "To Be Looked at ..., Close to ..." thinking that Diana Vreeland, the Vogue editor renowned for her all-red apartment and her ever-unconventional mind, would have appreciated this show instantly.

Larry Becker Contemporary Art, 43 N. Second St., summer hours by appointment. 215-925-5389 or www.artnet.com/lbecker.html. Through Sept. 8.