

Subtle, Not Subtle: Evocative Nuance
West Branch Gallery and Sculpture Park
Stowe Vermont
February 14th, 2015-June 3rd, 2015

Snow was still knee-deep in the West Branch Gallery Sculpture Park but the warm glow and inner light that emanated from Helen Shulman's appropriately titled oil on panel, *Embers*, pulls your attention inside to this compelling exhibition of painting and sculpture.

The work of the three painters in the show; Marc Civitarese, Janis Pozzi-Johnson, and Helen Shulman seemed to float somewhere in the space between the wall and the viewer, indeed resonating with an emotional power belied by their delicacy of color and surface textures. Each of these artists manipulated light in very different ways. Civitarese uses light to dissolve the forms of nature; air, sea, sky. The paintings appear to envelop you in their misty atmosphere, like the encroaching fog of an early spring evening. His work maintains the most direct references to landscape painting as noted in the essay *The Emotional Power of Nature* by Ric Kasini Kadour included in the accompanying catalogue to the exhibition.

The mesmerizing surfaces of Janis Pozzi-Johnson's paintings dared to be touched. It was difficult not to reach out and caress the seductive textures that both absorbed and reflected light depending on your position and eyelevel. These paintings occupied the wall as objects and her use of gold paint only added to their jewel-like preciousness. It is impossible to feel the emotive sensibility of Pozzi-Johnson's paintings in reproduction. They rely on a complex web of literally hundreds of layers of oil and wax based color that must be experienced to be seen.

At first, the sculpture by Jonathan Prince felt out of sync with the theme of this show, but after some deliberation, the scale and placement of the work in this context began to connect, particularly the anodized and colored aluminum *Ruptured Column*. Its reflective, smooth, red surface undulated when struck by light and the "ruptures" invited a visual examination of the roughly pitted, silver interior of the form. This piece had an elegance that surpassed other examples of his work in the exhibition.

The North Gallery, a more intimate exhibition area, has been carved out of the center of West Branch Gallery's soaring interior space to house this lovely, most welcomed, season spanning showcase.

—Cynthia L. Close