

Time Out

New York

November 4–11, 1999

"In Tense"

Videoland, through Sat 6
(see Elsewhere).

You can credit the Internet with reviving abstraction; though where the point of abstract painting was once a total flattening of the picture plane, cyberspace offers a host of digital metaphors for thinking in 3-D. It seems like only yesterday painting was ruled by the idea of a grid strung so tight across the surface of a canvas you could bounce a quarter off it. Now that same grid is a door to a series of underlying networks that tease with a Renaissance sense of depth. A digital sublime? It's all here in the work of six painters assembled by curator Jeff Gleich.

The show's title, "In Tense," toggles between the dual meanings of physical tension and an intensity of vision expressed in technicolor palettes of acrylic, enamel, resin, ink and vinyl. Michael Rodriguez's kaleidoscopic freeze-frame of multihued circles appears to dangle like a beaded curtain of interlocking bubbles. John Widman's labyrinthine grid, assembled in four barely discernible quadrants, wraps around the edges of the canvas, suggesting a spatialized series of lattices. Blink, however, and you may miss it.

Steven Charles has built up tiny puddles of enamel that accrete in miniature archipelagos of color. These quasiaboriginal dots accrue in an unsteady line that suggests the overlapping routes of a metro map or meandering tunnels of an ant farm.

Maureen McQuillan's threadlike lines of ink and resin flow across the canvas like jagged tributaries converging in an oceanic center. At once wispy and pulsating, these gossamer strands point out the strength of Gleich's curatorial thesis: that the painter's spontaneous hand remains pertinent, even in a world of digitalized reality.

—David Hunt



Maureen McQuillan, *Untitled*, 1999.