



## Shotgun Review

# Diamond Rings

By Matt Stromberg *September 14, 2010*

For those who regard the academic formalism of color field painting as a dead end, please consider Nellie King Solomon's current exhibition at Brian Gross Fine Arts, *Diamond Rings*. Solomon uses brightly hued acrylics on eight-foot square Mylar sheets to create luminous paintings that maintain a tension between structure and accident. She creates C-shaped rings by dragging the paint across the Mylar using custom-made glass trowels. In contrast to the solidity of these muscular forms, the paint then spills and flows across the material as if actively trying to avoid containment. The pure green and magenta give way to rust colored orange and shades that resemble chemical sediment.

Solomon references the color field paintings of Morris Louis and Helen Frankenthaler, characterized by poured paint and the chance compositions that resulted. Instead of continuing the modernist endgame of searching for the essence of painting, Solomon enlivens this tradition by adding non-traditional elements, such as metallic glitter, which shimmers like diamond dust when the viewer shifts angles.

Painting on Mylar provides a further contrast to these earlier artists, who generally used unprimed canvases to soak up paint. In Solomon's works, the paint sits on the top of the Mylar, which recedes into the background, giving the impression of floating pigment, devoid of support. It also adds a sense of luminosity as light passes through instead of simply bouncing off the paintings' surfaces.

Solomon introduces seriality to her work, by beginning with highly structured forms that bear the traces of the gestures



*Magenta and Hooker's Green Rings 1*, 2010; acrylic and mixed media on Mylar; 96 × 96 inches. Courtesy of the Artist and Brian Gross Fine Art.

that made them. From there, she lets randomness shape the work, aided by the unevenness of the surface and the shifting of the ground. Hard edges give way to organic dissolution and the results resemble the cross section of a biological experiment gone awry, placed on a slide. By venturing outside the narrow confines of historic color field painting, Solomon paradoxically presents a beautiful argument for its continuing relevance.

*Diamond Rings* is on view at Brian Gross Fine Art in San Francisco through October 3, 2010.

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