

ARTnews

March 2010

Reviews: New York

Nola Zirin

June Kelly

This exhibition of paintings and works on paper (all 2009) spotlighted Nola Zirin as both a colorist and a master of shades of black and gray. Her virtuosic graphic imagination inclines toward contrasting hard edges with soft grounds and hovers between abstraction and illusion.

Zirin showed four paintings on the gray end that were tours de force of variously machinelike, architectural, astronomical, and calligraphic forms. *Astral Armada* and *Galileo Moons* both present galactic shapes. The former conveys a sense of floating planetary bodies, and the latter, with its repeated spheres, creates a more man-made, grid like environment. Areas of stenciling introduce design



Nola Zirin, *Astral Armada*, 2009, oil and enamel on canvas, 39 x 60.
June Kelly.

elements into the works, with red pigment providing glowing accents. Illusions of shadows and orifices, lend the effect of relief, also present in the artist's powder-black-on-white "Virtual Vistas" series on paper. Formally and tonally, Zirin's works on canvas and paper often evoke the sculptures of such powerful antecedents as Lee Bontecou and Louise Nevelson. The painting *Saturnine Spirals* adds an almost whimsical note of curvilinear white hand-writing, sandwiched between layers of luminous grays.

Alongside these relatively dark works were three bright, orange and electric blue paintings punctuated by straight black lines and geometric forms. In spite of their jarring shades, there was something calming about these flat, smooth expanses of paint, bearing such titles as *Planetary Still Life*, *QR Matrix*, and *Intersecting Orbits*. They were more successful at integrating color and black than *Lost in Palermo*, the one diptych in the show, which presents separated fields of multicolor and off-blacks. Zirin's latest works came off here as meaty and complex, covering the range of abstraction's capabilities.

—Cynthia Nadelman