

MORRISONGALLERY

Hugh O'Donnell ARTnews review

In the 40 works here, Hugh O'Donnell grappled with the depiction of light and space in oil on canvas and wood. The artist makes use of broad, loaded brushwork that allies him with Abstract Expressionism, but he is not averse to figuration. Elements in the 14 large paintings near the gallery entrance suggested leaves, seedpods, and stems. These vegetal forms suspended across the canvases offer a worm's-eye view through waving grass or weeds.

The influence of Zen ink painting, which O'Donnell studied on a trip to Japan in the late 1970's, remains evident in the subdued, calligraphic refinement of the best of these canvases, *Seeds of Snow* (1996) and *Cradle 1* (1997).

Two anterooms housed a selection of the artists' handsome painted-wood constructions. Lozenge, horseshoe, and petal shapes ranging in color from brilliant orange to deep aubergine pressed one another and hugged the wall. It was satisfying to see O'Donnell reining in some of his prodigious energy, which diffuses in his large canvases.

Small paintings evoked jumbled musical notation at the far end of the gallery, where treble and bass clefs engaged in wrestling matches. Here O'Donnell's choice of blaring primary colors seemed almost too aggressive, but the forms emerged taut and crisp - think Matisse's blue nude in a shredder.

- Johanna Ruth Epstein
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