

Dallas gallery showcases three approaches to abstract art

Cris Worley Fine Arts features the works of Shannon Cannings, Paul Winker and Richard Patterson.



"Starburst," a 2025 oil-on-panel work by Shannon Cannings, is a highlight of the artist's "Distortions" series at Cris Worley Fine Arts. (Kevin Todora / Cris Worley Fine Arts)

Abstract painting is a hardy perennial of the art world. Trends may come and go, but the practice of translating visual experience into line and color continues. At Cris Worley Fine Arts, each of the three artists now on view has a distinct approach to this practice.

In the front room, Pittsburgh-born, Lubbock-based Shannon Cannings shows a series called "Distortions" — 10 oil paintings and 24 small framed watercolors — whose vibrant patterns of black, white and primary colors derive from twisting and turning World War I-era dazzle camouflage patterns into contorted, vertiginous shapes. Following the compositions' twists and turns as they play with the optical effects of surface and depth, flatness and space is like riding a roller coaster.

Although references to gun culture have been prominent in Cannings' work, here the only connection is the use of melted gunmetal ink in the watercolors, leaving it up to the viewer how significant this should be. Another group of Cannings' work, also on view, depicts Mylar balloons that shimmer and swim in saturated secondary colors. My favorite of these, *Starburst*, is as tricky and distorted as the dazzle-based works; trying too hard to rationalize its shapes will set a viewer's head spinning.



The 2025 acrylic-on-canvas work "Amsterdam Tram" is among Paul Winker's contributions to his "easy does it" exhibition at Cris Worley Fine Arts.(Cris Worley Fine Arts)

Paul Winker's "easy does it," which includes a dozen acrylics in the second room, is the fruit of the artist's first trip to the Netherlands and Germany last summer. The larger, easel-sized works, each bearing the name of a place, such as Amsterdam Tram, Shirt (Amsterdam) or Awning (Amsterdam Centre), alternate one color at a time with white or gray in a regular rhythm, each turning a single element into a

picture through repetition. In another group of smaller, folio-sized works, bearing only initials for titles, each offers a blast of color and pattern. Winker's work reminded me of a young Ellsworth Kelly's enthusiastic response to the awnings and windows of Paris: "Everything I saw became something to be made."

In the third room are 10 "Nature Paintings" by U.K.-born, Dallas-based Richard Patterson. Each is made by passing a large palette knife back and forth over the canvas, with the same eight colors applied in different sequences. Like the work of Pop-era artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Gerhard Richter, this repetitive, chance-based procedure deconstructs the romantic idea of the brushstroke as a vehicle of the artist's self-expression in the name of something more objective and depersonalized.



Richard Patterson has a series of "Nature" paintings at the exhibition, each made by passing a single large palette knife back and forth over the canvas, with the same eight colors applied in different sequences. This one is called "Nature, Electric desert."(Cris Worley Fine Arts)

The series title “Nature,” however, urges viewers not to see the work as only deconstructive. To adapt the critic Raymond Williams’ remark about culture, nature is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language,” and Patterson’s accompanying statement touches on several of its senses (fact, harmony, life), through which viewers may weave their own interpretation of the paintings.

Details

“Shannon Cannings: Distortions,” “Paul Winker: easy does it” and “Richard Patterson: Nature Paintings” continue through April 12 at Cris Worley Fine Arts, 1845 E. Levee St., Suite 110, Dallas. Free. Open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 214-745-1415 or visit crisworley.com.

— BENJAMIN LIMA