

PAUL KOLKER collection

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PAUL KOLKER:  
ABSTRACT DECALCOMANIA...AN EXPERIMENT IN PERCEPTION

September 15 - November 3, 2016



*abstract decalcomania bezold noir exp.1, 2016*  
acrylic on canvas  
55 x 55 inches

PAUL KOLKER collection presents *Paul Kolker: Abstract Decalcomania... An Experiment in Perception*. The exhibition opens on September 15, 2016 in Chelsea at 511 West 25th Street in addition to an ongoing satellite exhibition of related works currently on view in Midtown at 600 Third Avenue. Kolker, as both artist and curator, is known to create and exhibit his art as an experiment in perception, testing our experience. Because technology has changed the ways we see, understand and communicate by using devices with flat screens, display grids and colored dots of light, the dot remains Kolker's focus; but in this expansive exhibition there is a new twist.

*Decalcomania* is a studio art technique used by Kolker since 1980. A painting, called the *positive*, is made on a prepared canvas. While the paint is still wet, it is covered with a sheet of plastic, called the *negative*. The field of painting remains in full view through the clear plastic and enables the artist's deliberate, yet gestural, movements of pools of paint. Upon completion of the painting, the cover plastic is lifted. The surface tension of the paint promotes a rippled patterning in both the positive and negative layers, which has been described as fractal-like repetitive branching or something reminiscent of the look of Tiffany glass. The new twist is that by means of Kolker's sandwich painting process, abstractions of unmixed colors acquire a more expansive fractal dimension from which fields of color exhibit discrete and reproducible distortions of rippling, fractal branching and Tiffany-like color gradients. The twist is a new look; called by the artist, *abstract decalcomania*.

The effects of the new abstract decalcomania paintings and light sculptures are enhanced by what Kolker calls the *Bezold effect*; circumscribing and spotlighting the center of the abstract painting with a signet; a two dimensional black or white ring with squared corners and a central transparent circle, as in the painting depicted above *abstract decalcomania bezold noir exp. 1, 2016*.

The effects of the artist's process and his expressed abstraction are also enhanced by testing the viewer's perception by masking portions of the paintings and leaving much to the imagination. While direct perception is limited to the capacity of the retinal receptors which only measure intensity, wavelength and oculocentric direction of the light stimulus entering the eye and sending signals to the brain; *indirect perception* is an extrasensorial physiologic mechanism analogous to problem solving. Hidden within the above decalcomania painting is Kolker's text which both demonstrates and describes indirect perception as inferential, "intelligent, thought-like processes" of imagination, insight and intuition which enable our discovery of things even when they are not in clear view:

*"The truth is that perception, by using imagination with insight and intuition, tests our sensory experiences like an experiment does. We are the measuring instrument for the experiment, even though we are biased by anecdotal memories of prior experiences as well as by our gut feelings and beliefs. What we feel or believe to be true may merely be a figment of our imagination, perceptual blindness or an inconvenient truth that perception is a selfie. When we stand before this painting we test it, make sense of it, become part of it and discover this real truth. That the painting's embossed message about indirect perception is in fact about our self perception. That we are indirectly the object of our perception."*

With an understanding of *indirect perception* it becomes clear that the hidden expressions of *abstract decalcomania* invite the viewer to use her indirect perception to project herself into the painting; as projective psychological tests like the Rorschach do. It also becomes understandable how Kolker's art as an experiment in perception tests the viewer who is simultaneously the measuring instrument as well as the object of the experiment; with evoked feelings, understandings and more.

Paul Kolker (b. 1935) is a New York based artist with doctorate degrees in medicine and law. He is Emeritus Chief of Cardiothoracic Surgery at North Shore/ LIJ Glen Cove Hospital, having practiced cardiothoracic surgery on Long Island from 1969 to 2013. In October 2001 Kolker moved his Long Island studio to his current address in the Chelsea art district so that he could produce his works and curate his exhibitions as an experiment in perception. His studio and gallery have together become his laboratory in which the viewer is the measuring instrument for Kolker's art as a perceptual experiment. *Abstract Decalcomania... An Experiment in Perception* is Kolker's fifty-fourth solo exhibition.

In *Paul Kolker: Abstract Decalcomania... An Experiment in Perception*, forty paintings and light sculptures are on view at 511 West 25th Street from September 15 through November 3, 2016 and already on view at 600 Third Avenue.

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