

FORM AND COLOUR

New paintings by Jee Young Kim

Warwick Brown

It is always exciting to follow the development of an artist from talented graduate student to a mature, confident practitioner. I well remember Richard Lewer's graduate show, years ago, positively erupting with original talent. He has, of course, gone from strength to strength. I hope to see the same sort of progress in the career of Jee Young Kim. Her Elam graduate show in 2002 was one of the best of her year. She exhibited only three large abstract-expressionist paintings, but they were standout successes – adventurous, confident and very colourful without being garish. The artist has just returned from two years at the New York Studio School and is exhibiting the fruits of her labours at the Bath Street Gallery. Far from being awed into creative immobility by exposure to the genre in the home of abstract expressionism, Kim's work seems to have bounced off it to new heights.

It is at least three decades since the pundits proclaimed that painting, particularly abstract painting, was dead. Every conceivable permutation of form, colour, application, scale, etc had been done. Kim, happily, ignores such discouraging cant. Her new work is totally engaging and a delight to behold. Why? It is hard to explain precisely. It's to do with balance, both of colours and forms, and a quite recognisable but undefinable *style*. Each painting is fully resolved and strongly composed, but also seems to have just happened on the canvas. In her show statement the artist says "I am working with the moment, working to see what happens as I move my brush. The idea of spontaneously taking a brush and applying colour, dealing with the vast possibilities of mixing colours of different weights, tones and values with different-sized brushes – all that is overwhelming, more than I can take". Perhaps she should have said "more than some artists can take". Kim can control the whole process. There is a definite structure imposed by fat sweeps of colour, but this deconstructed by all manner of subversive, seemingly random, brush marks. It all just works.

This sort of painting is not easy to do, and never was easy, even for old masters like Kline or De Kooning. I think Kim has "got something". I just hope that, somehow, she can hang on to it in the years to come.

Over the Rainbow, paintings by Jee Young Kim at Bathstreet Gallery, 43 Bath St Parnell until 27 May 2006.