

# ARTnews

Summer 2011

**reviews:** national

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**'20 Years, 20 Artists'**

Ralls Collection

Washington, DC

Through August 27

This 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary exhibition, a selection of works by 20 of Martha Ralls's favorite artists, spotlights the distinctive niche she has carved out in the burgeoning Washington, D.C., art scene.

While the show includes several representational works, such as William Dunlap's paintings of groups of cavorting hounds and Michael Kenna's crisp, carefully composed black-and-white photographs of landscapes in far-flung geographic locations like the Gulf of Finland and the Moroccan Sahara, most of the art on view is abstract.

Three paintings in oil or acrylic deserve special attention: David Richardson's *R No. 14* (2010), a boldly rendered red cross hovering above a large red circle, Mira Hecht's *Sensation* (2010) a deftly arranged abstraction of overlapping circles that range from opaque to translucent, and Su Kwak's *Sun Within* (2010), which is animated by dramatic, swooping slashes of impastoed white. Richard Serra's "Venice Notebook," a series of etchings depicting black circular forms that resemble ripples of water, recalls Venetian waterways.

The influence of Abstract Expressionism is most evident in Caio Fonseca's mixed media on canvas *Pietrasanta Painting Co6.54* (2010), in which the seemingly random placement of small white squares and flecks of white paint on a rich black background gives the work a ruminative, nocturnal feel, and in John Blee's acrylic on canvas *Orchard Mist* (2010), a pastel-hued arrangement of blocks of blues, greens, pinks and reds.

Best in show is a toss-up between Dana Volker's ambitious and striking Abstracts (2010), a grid of 15

tightly hung panels covered in colorful swirls of enamel, and James F. Dicke II's *Untitled #32* (2010), a large, beautifully composed mixed-media canvas in which converging multicolored shards draw the viewer into a central vortex.

This is a solid, appealing, and esthetically satisfying exhibition of works from a stable of gifted artists. – **Stephen May**