

Chung Eun-Mo

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Chung Eun-Mo's cool, almost Neo-Classical abstraction is very much a style on its own - at times approaching Minimalism, at other times close to the Mondrian and Bauhaus tradition, yet remaining distinct from either. Though quasi-geometric, it does not stress unduly the flatness of the picture plane nor the balance of a few primary colours. It is not even strictly purist - there are hints of buildings, passages and squares (the artist lives and works in Italy) and occasional patches of blue suggest the Italian sky (one work is titled Night Arches).

Primarily, however, these are pictures about colour relations and the tensions set up by squares, rectangles, lozenges and - in some cases - curved shapes. Though at first they may look like certain other types of international abstraction, elegant, well painted and slightly impersonal, there are in fact resonant inner spaces and even curious dislocations of angles and perspectives. The colours are fairly even and unaccented, yet somehow seem always right, and they achieve overall harmony by a certain cool, suffused light which acts as binding agent.

This is painting which repays time and intimacy; its inner logic is close and rigorous, and there is a clear intellect at work, but the effect is not in the least cerebral. Though geometry and "nature" are often considered incompatible - just why, I have never been able to find out - the presence of the monde visible is implicit throughout without appearing centre stage. Plainly, this is not abstraction which began on the drawing-board.

Eclipse makes telling use both of curving forms and of a kind of calculated asymmetry; other works are frankly entitled Winter and Spring. I can imagine people who prefer a more robust type of abstract art finding rather too much taste and too little aggression. Yet this apparently restrained, reticent painting is held together formally by a structure of light but tempered steel.

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