

Art News, March 1992, By Ruth Bass

R E V I E W S

Nola Zirin

JUNE KELLY

In her New York debut, Nola Zirin showed paintings and assemblages that intrigue and mystify. Tall, narrow canvases recall ancient slabs, and serve as occasions for meditation. One of the most engaging was *Sweep the Remains*, in which found objects of wood, rubber, metal, and straw have been placed on a 12-by-74-inch canvas and covered with dark brown oil paint so that the original nature of the materials is almost completely hidden. Projecting round and angular forms vaguely suggest a human figure, and folded sheets of rubber are transformed into what appears to be elegant drapery. But Zirin allows one object to keep some of its original identity—the straw of a broom at the top of the work is only partially covered in paint, and the ends stick out, providing a shock of hair for the abstract form, and a witty reminder of the artist's power to transform the most banal item into something magical.

In Zirin's paintings, the process is both revealed and obscured, with one layer of paint wiped over another, often creating a sense of landscape. In *Four Directions* there are four panels, each covered with mostly dark pigment—some streaked, some mottled, and some that seem to float across the surface. The viewer begins to wonder if the title of the piece refers to the directions of the artist's hand or if the subtle variations of color and texture allude to various parts of the world, with different vistas and weather conditions. Ultimately there is no answer to such questions, and the painting remains simply and strongly an object of contemplation. —Ruth Bass



Nola Zirin, *Sacred Place*, 1991, oil on canvas, 79½ by 41½ inches. June Kelly.