

Karen Kauffman's paintings reawaken the raw vitality of Abstract Expressionism, but also acknowledge the structural soundness that underlay the expansive gestures of the Action Painters of a half-century ago. Kauffman builds up her own paintings out of many brushstrokes, some broad, more short, quick, and very deliberately placed. Even in her most open canvases, where black strokes course and swirl on white backgrounds like Asian calligraphy freed from its structures, Kauffman exercises a meticulous care, laying down the strokes in exactly the right places. In her more characteristic multicolor works, she accrues myriad little strokes into dense, flickering skeins of paint. These seem to congeal into urban jungles where vegetation and/or habitation multiplies uncontrollably. On occasion, figures seem to emerge from these impossibly intense webs of energy; but they don't get far before the tumult reabsorbs them. But, especially in her latest work, Kauffman makes explicit none of these apparent motifs. The viewer is left to find, or sense, or even project such subject matter. Kauffman herself is interested in conveying simply a surge of abstract sensation, one that ricochets around each painting.

Peter Frank 2006
"Ethereal"