

ARTEFORUM

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sidered established, many of them from the School of Paris.

If a unifying factor were to be discovered besides the overall high quality of the paintings, it would be the strong presence of color as a structuring element. Along with the masterly color we expect from Bonnard (here, *Interior with Two Figures*, 1935, and *Le Caneet*, 1935) and Van Gogh (*Le Bosquet*, 1890, painted a few weeks before his death), are four Cubist gouaches of Jacques Lipchitz (one from 1916, the others, 1918) in which the segments of form are brought out through the contrasting colors which work together the way the facets of a Cubist image do. Four Frank Kupka oils dating from 1911-23 indicate his early use of abstract forms through pervasive color — *Ovale Animé* 1911-12, is particularly exciting. The exquisite Degas pastel, *Jeune Fille au Tub*, 1887, in deep and emanating tones is one of the finest Degas pastels on this theme. Giacometti's *Landscape*, 1953, is a beauty.

The luminous grey delineations on this small canvas are infused with delicate tones of green to brown, a pale purple, blues, and greens. It is the only landscape in this exhibition where the depth of perspective is present. Jasper Johns's small painting, *The Little False Start* (21¾ x 18½) 1959-60, is a wonderful patchwork of brilliant encaustic color and collage; stencilled names of colors appear on patches of color not necessarily corresponding.

A strong interest in structural form, particularly Cubist form, is reflected in the collection. For example, there are eight Lipchitz Cubist drawings and gouaches, two Braque Cubist still lifes of 1921 and 1936 and a Picasso still life of 1936. Of Leger, the frantic interactions of *The Pipe*, 1918, contrasts with his *Jeune Fille au Bouquet*, 1921, which has a comparatively static and peaceful quality.

And these works are for the most part somber, if not almost tragic in tone. Kokoschka's *Painter with Doll*,

1918-19, is especially moving. The lifeless doll, Kokoschka's companion, has a vital expression. The painter, confused and desperate, points to her naked belly. But then, in contrast to the overall somber tone is Miró's humorous and delightful *L'Etoile Filant*, 1938. — JUDITH WECHSLER

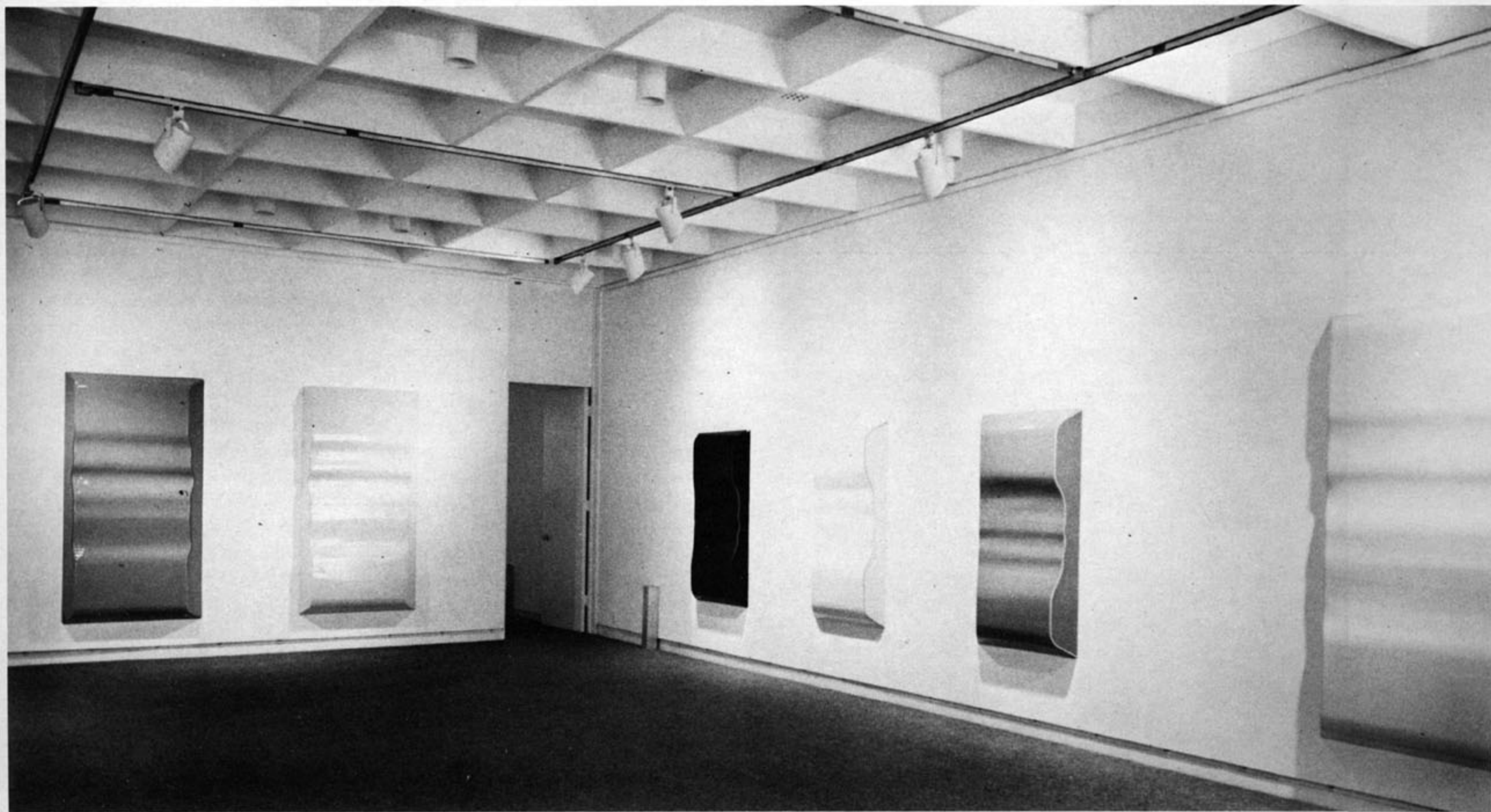
CRAIG KAUFFMAN, Ferus/Pace.

Most important in Craig Kauffman's new work at the Ferus/Pace Gallery is the "disappearance" of the mechano-organic shapes which were his individual forte. These shapes, biomorphic, eccentric cams and linear capsular shafts, first emerged painted and outlined upon sheets of clear plastic. In the following move the shapes were molded, protruding from the surface, and transparently dyed. Now, retaining the rectangular format but sacrificing those earlier trade-

marks, he indicates a painter's concern for the traditional picture plane, though it be a relief.

The unexpected progression is that the shape and the plane are one, the former stretched to create the latter. Kauffman has not, as one might at first surmise, simply thrown overboard as so much excess his previous forms, for the suggested pulsating quality of those shapes has become the very fabric and substance of the entire work.

Varying from small to large (75" x 39") in size, the pieces are vacuum-molded, color-impregnated, acrylic plexiglass. As in the case of castings of sculptures or impressions in printmaking, the works are the result of an industrial-line reproducing process, though each is individually finished and unique rather than existing in total as duplicates in an edition. Coincident with the serial method, the matrix sets up predetermined conditions of formation, but size and color choices provide options for in-



Installation view, Craig Kauffman exhibition, Ferus/Pace Gallery, Los Angeles.

numerable variants. The plane undulates in curves; the protrusion's left and right edges are bounded by a pair of lines, a stripping of two blended enamel colors. The slanting of the sides, rounding of the corners, and the uniformity of the color all lead to an interpretation as softened objects. The recognition of the tray-like shell form also enforces their thingness. This would have been made even more forceful had the works been presented sideways, a move avoided — probably not even considered — for Kauffman has consistently favored the vertical format.

In contrast to the pliable character of the shape, there co-exists a frozen rigidity. The bilateral symmetry and straight outer edges, the drawing demarking the corners, the containing rectangular forms at the top and bottom, the horizontal banding pattern of light and shadow, and familiarity with the plastic material all contribute a vital sequence of stiffening agents. The works, then, hover be-

tween fluidity of movement and stiff concreteness.

The earliest of the series is the only transparent one, the only dark and therefore reflective one, and the only coolly colored one (a deep blue). Kauffman has eliminated transparency and the resulting rippling pattern previously seen on the wall behind the pieces by turning to opaques. The selections include several each of ivory, pale yellow, bright yellow, full intensity orange, and a single rose-red. While the bright ones command immediate attention, appearing solid in a flashily open-handed manner, it is the softer, milkier ones which sustain interest. Color is now the substance of the material and of the subject. In keeping with the tension between soft and hard, the blended line alternates in chroma between riding on the surface and embedding into the fabric of the base color.

The material comes from the mold cleanly polished and reflective basically of light in the environment. The

play of light and shadow models the color but does not fully define the surface contour. Movement off the direct frontal axis is necessary to experience the profile and three-quarter views to achieve the maximum effect. Despite their apparent simplicity the viewer is directed to a slow part-to-part reading with frequent adjustments of focus and position. (John Coplans has noted this feature in relation to certain southern California sculptors like Bell and McCracken as well as in Kauffman.) In Kauffman's present works however, an immediate good Gestalt is not apparent. One builds toward a full comprehension by assembling visual data as in more traditional sculpture, but because the relationships are so closely meshed, so integral and interdependent they remain highly elusive and harmonic panel-objects.

Kauffman's work is generally sensuously enjoyable, and in terms of technical manipulation advanced and

original. A curious undercurrent has also imparted a distinctive flavor to his three series. The painted mechanomorphic shapes were obviously funky and sexual in their references — the first molded pieces seemed to resemble containers of edible or chemically delicious substances. It may be inherent in the very nature of these fresh color-forms to provoke the determination to pierce their warping facade. Biomorphic abstraction, even as partial a slice as is here presented, is too intimately related to essential life forms and functions to be accepted solely as an entertainingly engaging surface. The surreal overtones are too dominant in these static yet dramatic sheets to accept them only at the level of intellectual solutions to purely visual and pictorial problems. — FIDEL A. DANIELI

JOHN BATTENBERG, Esther-Robles Gallery; LES BILLER, RAY BROWN, DAVID GLINES, Ceeje Gallery; TOM



John Battenberg, *Morning Patrol*, aluminum, 10 x 8', 1967. Esther-Robles Gallery.



Leonard Esbenson, *Yepigregrebl*, m/m, 38 x 82 x 80'', 1966. Herbert/Palmer Gallery.