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ART IN REVIEW

CRAIG KAUFFMAN 'Late Work'

By KEN JOHNSON
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Danese
535 West 24th Street
Chelsea

Through Oct. 9



Craig Kauffman's sensuously minimalist wall sculptures at Danese play feminine to the masculine, mirror-bright monoliths of John McCracken now at the David Zwimer gallery in Chelsea. Both artists are associated with the efflorescence of subtly sensuous abstraction that happened in Southern California in the 1960s. Others include the glass-cube maker Larry Bell and the Light and Space sculptor Robert Irwin.

In the late '60s, Mr. Kauffman, who died this year at 78, adopted Vacuform technology, which had been used exclusively for commercial purposes.

He formed shapes resembling large, hemispheric bubbles, which attracted much attention at the time. Recently he returned to the bubble form, and this show presents a half-dozen examples. Painted from behind in nacreous lacquers — in off-whites and tints of orange, yellow and green — they resemble giant pearls. He also created concave forms with glittery, six-sided centers that are like big flower blossoms. Also spray painted from behind, they are exquisitely colored. Glowing, misty yellow surrounds the magenta center of one; royal blue frames the emerald hexagon of another.

Most enticing of all are two works shaped like donuts or inner tubes. Fatter on the bottom than the top, they create a perspectival illusion, as if we were seeing them in a near-horizontal position. They call to mind translucent children's swim toys. One in sparkly blue has hints of yellow highlighting, enhancing its tubular form and luminous interior.

With their combinations of transcendentalist ethereality and pragmatic fabrication — and a kind of beauty that seems at once tacky and sumptuous — Mr. Kauffman's sculptures are as relevant today as ever.