

Under the guise of pursuing abstract painting, Lester Monzon is actually a representational painter. What he represents are images of abstraction. He is not the first painter to follow this path. He comes from a rich, if somewhat recent tradition.

Like the Brushstroke series of Roy Lichtenstein, Monzon's brushstrokes are not passionate bursts of expression the way the work of Franz Kline may be; they are calculated and highly rendered images of brushstrokes. Monzon's work shares this same intellectual approach even though it may appear to be lush and expressionistic. Monzon's brushstrokes are not traces of impassioned gestures – they are fetishes.

Monzon began his career painting textile patterns – stripes and plaids from his own collection of shirts and boxer shorts. From the outset he was walking a line between dutifully representing his world and simply pursuing hard edge abstraction.

His new work presents the viewer with a double layer: the background is hard-edged, reminiscent of the work of Brigit Riley or in some cases an overt tip of the hat to Gerhard Richter, although the patterns are now beginning to break apart becoming less regimented or predictable. Floating slightly over this ground so as not to produce too great a depth, are his rendered brushstrokes. Now and then these strokes fall under the background like a weaving in a textile, which is where the work began. And perhaps for the first time we begin to see real abstraction, a real brushstroke here and there, painted almost transparently as if hiding in plain sight.

- Wendy Adest