

ARTFORUM

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Ying Li, *Rose*, 1992-93,
oil on canvas, 41 x 30³/₄".

YING LI

ELIZABETH HARRIS
GALLERY

Ying Li's lush abstractions reflect the sheer pleasure she takes in the process of painting. For Li, painting is a symbol of freedom of expression. Born in Beijing, she became interested in painting in the Western tradition as a child, but because of the Cultural Revolution she spent her teens doing agricultural labor in the countryside. With her return to the city and school, she began painting in oil and did some work in the Chinese social-realist vein that she summed up by saying, "You did what they told you to."

Upon moving to the New York area in the '80s, Li began to stress the importance of the act of putting oil on canvas while drawing heavily on personal experience. In *Still Life in Red*, 1993, and *Rose*, 1992-93, Li evokes a particular subjectivity from the loose and gestural strokes that form her rich surfaces and sweeping planes of color. In the former work, she mines the color red for all its expressive potential while reflecting on the tradition of the still life. The way in which the bowl of fruit seems to disengage itself from the surface, as if disintegrating, becomes a metaphor for the momentariness of life. Similarly, in *Rose*, the red stem of the flower is rendered as flickering flames that seem to point to the way in which time consumes us.

—Ronny Cohen