



Ying Li K.C. 1995, oil on linen 35 x 24 inches

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# YING LI

## Bittersweet Palette

ELIZABETH HARRIS GALLERY

**Y**ing Li uses paint in a manner reminiscent of de Kooning: broad expressive strokes suggest and even sculpt abstract space, often tending to reach out and feel for — like one who is blind — a steadying, figural presence. The figural density of Ying Li's work combines with her penchant for grey tones to remind one as well of the English modern tradition, of which Auerbach might be the best example.

Li's work has the same sense of emotional intensity grasped from the jaws of an unmoved and impassive life force. Her colors are often bright, as in "Sunflower" (1995), or in the deliciously composed "Little Blue" (1995) — a tiny Turner-esque soliloquy upon an emotional storm.

And yet in "Dancer KC" (1995), the color and the stroke, accentuated darkly by dripping and other accidental-on-purpose texturing, one sees the motion of the dancer, the blur of movement in the paintstroke, but also picks up hints of a darker force — a mummified emotionality — haunting the present moment and its joy.

In "Abandoned Rose," Li again finds a bittersweet balance between the joyful and the sad. This rose is neither a flower-pot extravaganza as Van Gogh would paint, nor flowers set upon a grave or tossed on the water. But the grey and purple do mix in ashy ways that suggest the scenario of dead flowers kept on a mantel, long after the occasion which set them there: left there, unchanged, in unchanged water, as an emblem of a soul unwilling to let go of a moment it instantly recognized as rare and unrepeatably, and yet could not then express the fear in that thought. In all of Ying Li's paintings, the joy and greater sadness of emotional moments in an existential world come through.

ROBERT MAHONEY