



View of Ingrid Calame's *Secular Response 2 A.J.*, 2003, enamel on Mylar, 12 by 35 feet; at James Cohan.

Ingrid Calame at James Cohan

Ingrid Calame traces the contours of stains she finds on the streets of New York and Los Angeles. She also measures each stain, records the place and date of its discovery, and then files the drawing away for future use in her paintings. Seven of these paintings were recently presented at James Cohan, as were two room-size installations.

Calame's technique mimics the appearance of gestural abstraction. The meticulous tracings preserve every splatter, trickle and drip of the original stains. Yet once the drawings are transferred to sheets of Mylar or aluminum panels, she carefully fills their contours with enamel paint. The results may resemble Pollocks or Stills from a distance, but the smooth, even surfaces suggest a paint-by-numbers version of Abstract Expressionism.

Despite their rather clinical execution, Calame's paintings can be formally thrilling. When working on aluminum panels, she arranges several stain drawings into compositions she calls "constellations." Their layered intricacy is matched by a remarkable chromatic range. Typically avoiding primary colors, Calame paints each abstract shape a subtle shade that begs a precise adjective. The dominant reds of *Ipk!* (2003), for example, are better described as maroon, brick and paprika.

The allusive palette can often transform random street residues into maplike topographies. This was most apparent in *Bb-Aaghch!* (2003), one of two large paintings measuring 6 feet square. A number of graduated blue stains occupy the center of this panel and suggest the varied depths of a multifingered lake. Surrounding passages of pine green, sandy yellow and frosty lavender may also be read in a cartographic fashion.

Calame's installations derived from *Secular Response 2*, an enormous drawing on Mylar she produced in the spring of 2001. After first recording stains in Lower Manhattan, she arranged the sketches on the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange. She then retraced the entire configuration on 15,000 square feet of transparent plastic, documenting the carpet of stain tracings and its architectural context. Segments of that drawing, each measuring 12 by 5 feet, were hung side-by-side in two rooms of the gallery to surround the viewer with continuous flows of abstraction. By painting all the stains a sharp lime-green,

Calame suggested an irradiated moss whose organic spread was occasionally interrupted by chunks of unpainted negative space that designated the Stock Exchange's floor plan. In view of its setting, one might interpret the green growth in economic terms, perhaps as a metaphor for the circulation of money.

—Matthew Guy Nichols