

TED LARSEN [End of the Line]

at McMurtrey Gallery through May 31st

by Todd Camplin

Ted Larsen has developed a style that makes his work pretty recognizable, even though he takes slightly different approaches to each individual work. From his more sculptural work to his flat paintings, you will see variety in Larsen's works on the "line" this month at McMurtrey Gallery.

Exploration of the "line," has a long tradition with countless artists demonstrating their own take on the subject. Ted Larsen expresses the line through shift in color, flat lines, lines that suggest a space relationship, line that enters our space sculpturally, and countless other nuanced expressions which I could not list without sounding like a phone book. Wait, do people still use those things? The painting, "Bent Elbow," between two similar paintings has several scratch mark lines along with what looks to be precisely machined lines in bright earthy colors. "Out of the Hood," is a line of ordered color shapes. "Playing with Angles" and "Loose Knot" both reach across the ages for inspiration.

I have noticed a trend arising in the tradition of painting where several painters are using the Modernist development of creating a flat painting and combining this with the Renaissance tradition of depicting dimensionality. Artists David Collins, Sherry Tseng Hill, and Larsen's works "Playing with Angles" and "Loose Knot," are examples you find this play of old and new merging together. Larsen is able to create a clean graphic look, similar to an Op artist. Of course, on closer inspection, Larsen allows the flaws to give his work more character and some might say wit. But wit often implies a kind of one liner joke, and Larsen's paintings are anything but an oversimplified idea. True, Larsen is playful with color and with his celebration of wear.

For me, I see Larsen's work more as thoughtful exploration of reusing material and capturing of time. After all, once an object becomes art, attempts are made to try to freeze that object in time. Curators and collectors attempt to preserve their art. Larsen has rescued salvage items that might have changed over time dramatically due to weathering, if it weren't for his intervention. As Larsen's title of the show suggest, this is the End of the Line for these objects returning to the earth as raw materials, but they have a new beginning as an art object. You might say his exploration of line is also expressed in a timeline.

Often the lines I am concerned with are the ones found on a map. I can't explain it, but I have always lived four hours away from Houston and I have lived in three different cities in Texas. So if Ted Larsen's show at McMurtrey Gallery was worth a four hour drive for me, then you should think about a visit. But, you only have until May 31st to see it.