REGEN PROJECTS

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ART IN REVIEW; Sue Williams

By **MICHAEL KIMMELMAN**   DEC. 1, 2000

303 Gallery

525 West 22nd Street, Chelsea

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It has been amazing to watch the change in Sue Williams's art during the last decade. She started making rage-filled, clotted, sometimes outrageously funny works about the tribulations of women (triggered by her experience as a battered woman). Then suddenly she began painting pictures that looked like big abstractions along the lines of Jackson Pollock, Willem de Kooning or Joan Mitchell, except that up close those bright curvy lines on white fields revealed themselves to be swarms of penile heads and bodies pulled and twisted like taffy. The effect was between Pollock or de Kooning and the Road Runner, the tone light, the manipulation of paint less ham-fisted than before.

Last year the process took another step, the bodily content of her wormy figures and sexually suggestive splatters and drips sharing the stage more equitably with an increasingly complex and graceful somersault of tremulous forms.

Now this. The allusions are completely gone, leaving just abstract lines: confetti splashes of red, yellow and blue, calligraphic pirouettes, sweeping curves and minor skirmishes, mostly spare on big bare white canvases. You can read what you like into the images, but in the way you read meaning in Pollock's drips, which is to say hypothetically. The body is present as it is in Pollock's work: in the line as a record of the movement of the artist's hand. Pollock, Mitchell, Sam Francis, late de Kooning: choose your own connections. Her work, like all of theirs, has elements of buoyancy, wit and cheek.

It is as if Ms. Williams were seeing how far she could push this sort of elegant abstraction before alienating her old audience, which, in terms of an approach, may not really be so different from her button-pushing early work. A funny thought. MICHAEL KIMMELMAN