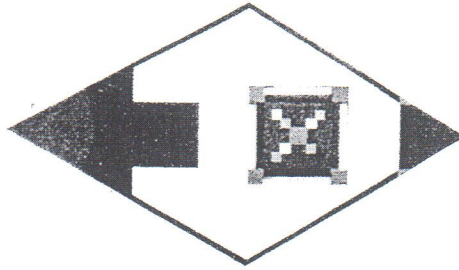


ARTS

M A G A Z I N E



**Marilyn Lerner, *Jaipong*, 1988, Oil on plywood, 48" × 83½".
Courtesy John Good Gallery.**

In contrast to the high-art simulationism of Gilbert Hsiao, the geometric paintings of **Marilyn Lerner**, recently shown at John Good Gallery (February 11–March 4), follow another line of discourse entirely. Lerner's work may relate to a system of vision, but it is not standardized. By allowing influences from Asian cultures, such as that of the island of Bali, into her geometry, Lerner interposes a synthesis of conflicting elements as if attending to a spiritual source. Eastern religions are highly systematized. The whole notion of the *tanka* in Buddhism, for example, is a diagrammatic guide to transcendent reality. The visual and conceptual tenacity of the *tanka* is a way of connecting microcosmic feelings with macrocosmic essences. Often this union carries a powerfully subtle mixture of sexual signs with the depiction of deities and flaming celestial bodies dyed in brilliant colors. In *Forms of Experience* (1988), Lerner declares the space of the wall as integral to the openings and edges of the painting. While this might sound like a purely formal maneuver, à la early Frank Stella, it is quite another kind of formalism—one that carries semantic weight through the echo of Eastern content.

The concept of the void is a basic one in Buddhist thought—something that artists ranging from Yves Klein to Forrest Bess have evoked on other occasions. For Lerner, the void as expressed in the term *sunyata* applies, in that the geometric system of color and shape expresses the moment of fertility or spiritual realization. The microcosmic/macrocosmic unity of the Self is also expressed in *Jaipong* (1988) and *Circular Time—As Dream* (1988), the latter being a work on paper.

Like the *tankas* of Buddhism, particularly those found in the Himalayan region, Lerner's paintings offer a synthesis of opposite forces—not necessarily conflicting forces—that define a sense of Being in the image. These paintings might be seen as images attempting to get beyond imagery.

Robert C. Morgan