

# A R T S

## M A G A Z I N E

Addison Parks, October, 1979

When so many seem to be out either to invent the next self-cleaning oven of painting, on the one hand, or totally deny its continuing evolution on the other, seeing the work of a young painter exploring and expanding on broken ground refreshes with a satisfying promise.

Gary Komarin has taken up his search behind painters like Diebenkorn and Guston. At twenty-eight, his fiery energy and single vision have helped him produce a large body of mature and consistent work. Each canvas is an adventure through one pair of eyes, one set in the union that is the vision of Gary Komarin. These images are not the product of careful rendering or some magical technique, but the result of direct and simple devotion to the act of painting- painting in the tradition of Abstract Expressionism: painting about light and space achieved through color, shape and line.

There is little remarkable about a painter pursuing Abstract Expressionist painting. After all, it is our only tradition. What is remarkable is that he has accepted the peripheral limitations of a valid but well-beaten course ( many would say a dead horse ), and has not only taken us deeper into that frontier land but has also managed to make fresh, unstudied paintings that are bright with an almost clumsy frankness. It is this liveliness in spite of an overwhelming tradition that makes them so exciting.

Pools of color, oddly shaped and ranging in size, are set with and against each other like stones in wall, giving the paintings the puzzlelike flatness of rectangular pieces of land as seen from above. With little fences of different colors nervously containing them, the effect is at once flat. Then they shift, with no accessible perspective to guide space and with little obvious overlapping or suggestion of diminishing proportions: just space felt out with color and light within the ephemeral bounds of the picture plane.

Komarin achieves this space by overlapping transparencies onto opaque underpainting and by painting so frantically as to allow the underpainting to push through the thin or uncovered patches left behind. This loose brushwork accounts for an expansiveness which would otherwise be lost in the geometric confines of the superstructure, while the morning light quality of the color further allows shapes of paint to jump beyond the bounds of their containment. Along the contours of these shapes Komarin runs his emotional lines which seem to be trying to get away with anything to avoid their job of outlining and defining shapes. They backtrack, sidestep, skip and sway their way along their paths. Occasionally they have to be dragged and sometimes they break away and take off across some open field of color. Their own color ranges from delightful compliments to dutiful darks and surprising lights. Like the rest of the paint, they are turpentine-thin without dimension but always alive in motion.

The experience of these images recalls both the landscape and interior space. As landscapes they recede into space across horizontal beaches of color interrupted by earthly details: as interiors they have a vertical geometry that suggests the more intimate breakup of an architectural space defined by furniture and man-made objects moving in and out of shadow. There is really no distinguishing these two different types: only the subtle changes of composition and color divide their experience.

Just what Gary Komarin has brought to the archives of Abstract Expressionism with his first New York Show is hard to say. Good painting, mostly. No inventions to speak of - just solid, sensitive vision; a power and presence both modest and impressive; new life, himself.