

**Peterson, William, *Timothy App And Constance DeJong*, ARTnews, January 1988: 178**

At a time when abstract painting seems either clogged with the desperation of too much paint or choked with an overdose of irony, it is rare, even inspiring, to come upon work made with clarity and restraint. Entering this exhibition was like opening the door to a chapel in a well-kept monastery. Everything was predominantly black against the white walls, though Timothy App's paintings offered a range of hardedged grays with accents of white, and here and there on Constance DeJong's modestly scaled sculptural forms was at glint of copper. Austere and liturgically calm, each item had a singular integrity and intensity.

App's canvases are either five and a half feet square or stretch to six feet in one dimension. The interior of each is sectioned off architecturally into assorted rectangular zones, each painted a different shade of gray, black, or white. Like certain Mondrian paintings in which the black grid lines do not completely reach the framing edge, these rectangles stop just short of one another or overreach slightly. The effect is more open and relaxed than Mondrian, though this is partly a factor of scale.

The most successful of App's pieces are those in which one of the internal rectangles is isolated within a frame, creating a focal area. Guardian and Sanctuary each have a rich, black rectangle framed in white. Others have a white rectangle framed in black, with a startling incandescence like the sudden glare of an empty movie screen when the film breaks. App's austere palette is as carefully modulated as Ansel Adams's photographic "zone system."

Some of DeJong's planar sculptures are freestanding; others are wall-dependent. Between 18 and 20 inches high and 19 to 30 inches wide, the wall pieces are about three inches thick, while the freestanding works, placed on pedestals, swell to about eight inches. The format usually involves two planes, canted at slight angles to each other. These planes are the broad sides to two volumes that are roughly wedge-shape. Some of the surfaces are wood painted black, but most are wood covered with copper plates. In a manipulation that allows numerous painterly effects, De Jong brushes on a chemical that reacts with the copper and creates a rich black surface. The black can be built up like charcoal, or it can be brushed on and stopped out to leave patches or ragged edges of shiny metal showing through. Sometimes a plate of polished copper is left on the sides or back to catch the light and reflect it onto the wall or add a warm glow between the black masses. It is that quiet luminosity emanating from these dark forms that lends them spiritual resonance.

—William Peterson