



November 25, 2010

JOAN THORNE: ‘Recent Paintings’

By **KEN JOHNSON**

Sideshow

319 Bedford Avenue

Williamsburg, Brooklyn

Through Dec. 19

In 1979, the critic Barbara Rose, a champion of Minimalism in the 1960s, organized an exhibition called “[American Painting: The Eighties](#),” in which she took a stand against nonpainterly trends of the ’70s, from Photorealism to Conceptualism and video, and heralded a return to a kind of intuitive, high-energy painting that had prevailed in the Abstract Expressionist ’50s.

Joan Thorne was one of the stars of that show, and Ms. Thorne would be included in the 1981 Whitney Biennial, 10 years after participating in the last Whitney Annual in 1971. But the ’80s would not be kind to Ms. Thorne’s kind of raucously sensuous abstraction, as more cerebral trends like Neo-Geo and overbearing forms of Neo-Expressionism seized the day. Her hot career cooled.

Ms. Thorne’s new, exuberantly brushy, fruit- and candy-colored canvases fit right in with the permissive pluralism of painting today. Her works sometimes veer close to the merely decorative, but at their best they convey an infectious joy. Using wide brushes in a seemingly spontaneous manner on medium-size canvases, she layers swirly and staccato, zigzagging strokes over eccentrically divided fields of solid color.

In the incandescent “Khajarah Sun,” loopy, impetuously applied, watermelon-colored brushstrokes over a mango-yellow background create a roiling, fiery impression. Enigmatically, a ghostly, olive-green, curvy, triangular figure hovers in the middle of the picture as similarly colored daggerlike shapes point inward from the edges and a green line meanders across the lower section. Optically captivating, the work conveys a state of visceral and cosmic ecstasy.