

DAVID DUPUIS

DEREK ELLER GALLERY

David Dupuis is best known for works on paper that employ monotype, ink, colored pencil, and graphite to create sensuous, gleaming, biomorphic abstractions that look more carved than drawn. After a fifteen-year hiatus, however, the artist has returned to oil, and although his penchant for undulating or radiating stripes has carried over from the works on paper (eight of which were also on view in a separate gallery), a sense of the fresh, the odd, and the mind-bendingly mysterious was evident in this exhibition's nine new paintings.

In *Doubt Collecting* (all works 2003), a disembodied hand with a pointed index finger (like a piece of clip art) seems to send a lighting bolt across the painting to another disembodied hand brandishing a crucifix. Left of center, a blue crystalline mass encrusts a hill of brownish but also pink, blue, and green strokes of paint, which dissipate on the right into dense constellations of dots. A gorgeously glowing pink mist drifts over the hill under a gray and yellow sky whose soft smokiness is abruptly cut off by a razor-sharp horizon line. It's as if a range of forces and effects—of paint, nature, and religion—are being played out on the same field. Dupuis struggles with but ultimately revels in his rechosen medium, opening new doors for himself both of technique and of content.

In *Always Jones'n*, a pair of eyeballs balance like eggs on the edge of a flesh-colored platform, presiding over a bizarre landscape in which a plethora of patterned segments (tricolor rainbow, crystalline facets of blue and brown, a blue and white area with the appearance of fabric) spill over the striped borders of the picture; in *Candy Coated Mountain* an arrow points out a small pile of "paint for paint's sake" brushstrokes. *This Worrisome Land* is a barren expanse built up from small daubs of many different colors, with a cartoonish

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David Dupuis, *Always Jones'n*, 2003.
oil on canvas, 35 x 27"

electrical storm threatening on the horizon.

Although Dupuis is charting new territories in his mind (many of his titles indicate a certain inward attention), a vaguely "vintage" aura surrounds these paintings. There's the psychedelic-inflected imagery: zigzag lightning bolts outlined with stripes, a disembodied tongue licking a giant ice cube, rainbow or radiating stripes that fill in silhouetted headlike shapes, and the nesting stripes in odd color combinations that define some works' borders. Then there's the slightly battered appearance of a few paintings (contrasting with the gemlike precision of the artist's graphite work). Have they been carted around or recovered from a basement (or perhaps Dupuis painted over canvases that *have* suffered such treatment)? The striped borders of *The New Grove of Trees on the Edge of Town* and *Behind Every Dark Cloud Is Another Dark Cloud* have small daubs and smears of paint on them, almost as if they'd been carelessly leaned against another, still-wet painting. Moreover, their modest size (on average, nineteen by twenty-five inches) plays off a sort of monumental content—they're mental landscapes charged with ideas around pleasure, mortality, and human relationships—and this also contributes to the curiously dated feel. The results are disjointed and wonderfully weird: art created from, and for, an intimate, one-on-one head trip.

—Julie Caniglia