



GERALD HAYES

paintings

March 14 - April 13, 1990
Opening Reception
2 P.M., Wednesday, March 14

CALKINS GALLERY

CALKINS HALL

HOFSTRA UNIVERSITY

HEMPSTEAD, NEW YORK

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GERALD HAYES' MATERIAL IMAGE

Gerald Hayes' work poses a question of hefty material in relation to "pure" abstract form. A hundred years ago, in the time of Post-Impressionism in painting (and of the Symbolist movement in literature), making a work of art that would be as real as the ordinary things of the world was an uphill battle against illusionistic representation (like making a poem that was before all else an assembly of certain words with certain actual sounds, against all the sentimental "poetic" subject matter left over from the 19th century). By now however, if a painting is merely an object, well, so what; the world is already crowded with stuff.

But here the forms, as geometric and even tooled with a scraper as they are, are also undisguisedly handmade. And the very materials of Hayes' format are not to be taken for granted, either, thanks to his free shifting, back and forth, between what we take as conventional stretched canvas and hard panels of wood, with metal hardware inserts. In terms of what is "going on" here, structurally, this very alternation points up a "canvas" as something to be noticed rather than taken for granted. If the panels seem more familiarly materialistic, as if deriving from the realm of practical construction, we may now, with canvas as an active alter-

native, be reminded of the historical fact that Western painters actually worked on wooden panels long before they used canvas. Indeed, stretched "canvas", whether of linen or cotton, happens to have come into use just around the moment that pictorial perspective--just what modern painting would overcome in its striving for independence from representation--was codified, in the 15th century.

Yes, photography had a lot to do with the artistic liberation of painting from the 19th century on, as Gerry Hayes should know: his already "abstract" works of 1970's took off from actual photographs, extrapolating structures from within the photographic representation and effecting something of the "abstract" character of diagrams. In some of these earlier works a "G"-like form, suggestive of the artist's first initial, is evident. I call attention to this because, without rubbing it in, such forms also predominate in the scraped swirls of paint in Hayes' recent paintings. The point is not to "crack" any imposed "code", but to acknowledge that an art that looks as "material"(ist?) as this can visibly be the product of painterly decisions that are, all along, as personal as they are structural.

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Arena,, 1989, acrylic on wood and metal, 24"X 24"