

ALEXANDRE GALLERY



At the GALLERIES



"Ribbonfall," by Gregory Amenoff.

Gregory Amenoff: At All Hours: New Paintings

Carpentry brings out the best in Gregory Amenoff. In a statement accompanying his third solo exhibition at Alexandre Gallery, Amenoff speaks to how building a studio cabin from the ground up led to changes in his art—most noticeably, the wooden frames surrounding his abstract paintings. Sometimes the frames are integrated within the image; sometimes they're separate. Always they're humble and straightforward, bordering on naive. Amenoff has never been a fancy paint-handler, favoring brusque, fleshy and, at times, over-insistent brush handling. His way with a saw is no less inelegant. It's a fit.

But less so because of how the frames function pictorially—they're a bit of an obvious gambit, really—than how they function temperamentally.

The recent paintings are, after all, par for Amenoff's course: vigorous riffs on the natural world that tap into a deeply American vein of mysticism. Think Arthur Dove, Marsden Hartley and the keening vistas of Clyfford Still; think awe and sobriety, starry-eyed transcendence and keeping your feet on the ground. But these paintings are also among Amenoff's best. Never before have his monolithic shapes, vine-like arabesques and craggy rays of light been as true or as self-possessed. They now have the same "weight and substance"—the same hard-headed credibility—Amenoff divined from the lumberyard materials he employed when building his studio.

Scale plays a vital role here. With the exception of "Ribbonfall," the jangled mid-sized picture that opens the exhibition, the finest pieces are small, hardly more than a foot in any direction. For Amenoff, less surface area means fewer and decidedly blunter forms. The resulting compression makes the relationship between, say, a clunky rectangle, a veering triangle and an encompassing scabbled line all the more muscular, organic, peculiar and necessary.

Amenoff's touch benefits as well, his brush having found an appropriate format for its size and sweep. Paintings like "Rill," "Stand" and the irresistible "Semaphore," all made in 2010, are happy to the extent in which they lumber, lurch and unfurl within the boundaries Amenoff has set for them.

[Mario Naves]
Through Nov. 27, Alexandre Gallery, 41 E.
57th St., 212-755-2828.