

Jan Dibbets

Gladstone

Dutch Conceptual artist Jan Dibbets's latest exhibition featured a selection from the artist's "Colorstudies"—a series of enigmatic, almost-monochrome photographs of landscapes and clouds reflected on the hoods of shiny cars. The negatives used to print these pictures (all dated 1976/2012) were taken more than 30 years ago, when Dibbets was interested in the new hues that manufacturers were using on their automobiles. Although the images were produced last year using the latest techniques, matte surfaces and small dings and scratches on the vehicles' finishes created an elegiac and nostalgic tone.

"Every photograph is a lie. It doesn't represent anything. Therefore it is both real and abstract," Dibbets told Sharon Boothroyd in the magazine *this is tomorrow*. Thus, the series' title, "Colorstudies," is probably meant to obscure any representational intentions the artist may have had. Ridges and divisions on car hoods divide each rectangular surface, obstructing the illusionistic qualities of the reflections.

In spite of his demurrals, Dibbets's photographs unavoidably conjure associations with the visible world. Gradually darkening and lightening from side to side, the simple, maroon surface of *Red Vertical*, for example, is appropriately slick, while the seductive *Dark Blue*

Vertical features a field of rich indigo dappled with luminous pink splotches that bring to mind outer space. The equally mysterious *Dark Green Diptych* resembles the depths of a mossy sea, and *Cyan Green with White Stripe* is bisected by a shaft of pale-green light reminiscent of a Barnett Newman zip painting. Intentionally or not, Dibbets found infinite depths in cars' rigid metallic surfaces.

—*Elisabeth Kley*

Alfonso Ossorio

Michael Rosenfeld

This year has seen a renewal of interest in the Filipino American artist Alfonso Ossorio (1916–90), with a rash of museum and gallery shows, both group and solo.

What made this exhibition, featuring 33 pieces produced between 1949 and 1953, stand out was the uniformly high quality of the work on view.

From today's perspective, Ossorio can be viewed in terms of both art history and esthetic pleasure. But history has not been kind to Ossorio, relegating him to the ambiguous status of friend (of Pollock or Dubuffet), man-on-the-scene, or rich dilettante (the worst). However, this show gave the lie to those canards and provided a valid sample of Ossorio as a powerful artist synthesizing the various kinds of nonobjective painting of his historical moment.

To understand Ossorio, we have to understand the process of American painting between 1938, when Roberto Matta moved to New York, and the 1950s, when American Abstract Expressionism, Pollock



Alfonso Ossorio, *Mother Within*, 1952–53, ink, wax, and watercolor on paperboard, 40 $\frac{1}{8}$ " x 30 $\frac{1}{8}$ ". Michael Rosenfeld.

especially, asserted its difference from European Abstract Expressionism. Ossorio served as a bridge between the two. Matta opened the way for nonobjective painting, but Ossorio never abandoned the expressionist fascination with the biomorphic. Like many of his contemporaries, such as William Baziotis, he found it impossible to drop all links to the real world.

What makes Ossorio's work from between 1949 and 1953 unique is the way the artist transformed the painterly surface into a womb where all sorts of gestation, violent and peaceful, takes place. *Mother Within* (1952–53), a composition of ink, wax, and watercolor on paperboard, underscores this idea. The mother is herself confined by a maternal body that is the painting.

Blood Lines (1953–54), which provided the title for the show and whose style and color scheme reappear in the monumental *Beach Comber* (1953), confirms Ossorio's obsession with artistic production as a species of parthenogenesis—the artist's self-fertilization and self-delivery. With *Blood Lines*, Ossorio plunges us into his artistic matrix and swallows us whole. There is no escape from this all-devouring mother—and we do not want one.

—*Alfred Mac Adam*



Jan Dibbets, *Dark Green Diptych*, 1976/2012, Fujicolor Crystal archive paper DPII glued on Dibond, two panels: 98 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 49 $\frac{1}{2}$ " each. Gladstone.