

A Lovely Little Show: "Toni LaSelle: Climate of the Heart: Paintings from the 1950's" at Inman Gallery

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BY KELLY KLAASMEYER



Toni LaSelle Climate of the Heart #4, 1956 acrylic (magna) on board, 14 x 10 inches, on view November 4, 2011-January 8, 2012.

I'm a sucker for Toni LaSelle's 60-year-old abstract paintings. Characterized as a pioneer of Texas Modernism, LaSelle studied with the legendary Hans Hoffman. She was a woman artist during the swaggering machismo of the abstract expressionist era and apparently one of the first Texas artists to fully immerse herself in abstraction.

The wonky angular shapes of her small paintings *Climate of the Heart #4* and *Climate of the Heart #5* are wonderfully engaging, as are their goofy '50s colors -- blacks and grays, whites and the greens of plastic plants.

They're done in Magma, this funky precursor to modern water-based acrylic paint that you had to thin with turpentine. That's a paint geek thing, but it's the kind of paint that the likes of color field artist Morris Louis used.

They're good paintings, but there's also something really beautiful about the way the Magma has aged and the colors have mellowed. There are a couple slightly clunky paintings in the mix, but it's a lovely little show. LaSelle has some great pattern-heavy watercolors on view as well.



Toni LaSelle Climate of the Heart #4, 1956 acrylic (magna) on board, 14 x 10 inches, on view November 4, 2011-January 8, 2012.



Toni LaSelle Provincetown after Oslo #7, 1961 watercolor on paper, 24 x 19 inches, on view November 4, 2011-January 8, 2012.

"Toni LaSelle: Climate of the Heart: Paintings from the 1950's" runs through January 8 at Inman Gallery, 3901 Main Street. For information, call 713-526-7800.