

**DAMON FREED**  
**CALM, COOL, COHERENT**

March 2009

In his recent series “Calm, Cool, Coherent”, Damon Freed, utilizes large-scale abstract shapes to serve as repositories for his inner emotions. These expressions are released through Freed’s subtle use of color and expressive brushwork. These non-objective paintings laden with meaning appear as irregularly-shaped colorful compositions painted on a pure white ground that are just as likely to be sliding vertically down the canvas as horizontally across it. In the artwork

*Damson Plum-Final Version* (2008), in “Calm, Cool, Coherent” the paint appears to slide horizontally with reddish lines separating the various shades of purple. It’s as if brushwork and color bend to the shapes.

Conversely, other works in this same series exhibit an overall effect of color that diminishes the hardness of the edges while drawing even more attention to the various possibilities of meaning found in the soft centers evident within each shape.

Shape quickly announces itself as the essential element of this series of non-objective artworks. Each irregular shape makes its way to the very edges of the canvas. The pure white ground the shape rests upon allows for light to emerge within the painting since Freed purposely avoids using white paint for his idiosyncratic shapes. Rather than mixing acrylic paint, he builds layer upon layer of paint, allowing each layer to dry before applying the next. The pure white ground hints at the elusive idea of purity found only in nature. A burst of colors evident within each shape offers the

viewer the rewards of exploring the diverse elements contained within a complex world that unfortunately too often seem to have been reduced to a point beyond recognition or connection.

The pure white ground and hard-edges created by the shapes guide the viewer towards the center. Upon entering the center the viewer is allowed to gradually lose oneself within the space the artist

appears to have reserved for the viewer’s gaze.

Psychological underpinnings gradually surface due to the varying color effects created by the multiple layers of paint and the light materializing from within the soft centers of each shape.

The contradiction between the sharp edges outlining the shape and the sensuous centers are not unlike the abundant contradictions in contemporary life where everything good has been twisted into something undesirable and everything once thought of as repugnant has become the accepted

norm. In a world where endless repetition fills our daily lives, coming upon an unexpected haven offering us calmness, coolness and perhaps even some semblance of coherency is a valuable commodity not to be overlooked.

The viewer who lingers over the centers begins to intellectualize the inner workings of the mind, be it the mind of the viewer or that of artist. Taking time out to allow one’s mind to refresh itself has the benefit of giving one a new perspective on the possibilities that still exist. The potential of where a



viewer may transport his mind seems without end in the galaxies of color provided for him by the artist willing to yield to his own sensibility. This allows the viewer in so he can share in something that lifts one out of oneself and into a new realm of hope. In these chaotic and uncertain times humans have a need to connect to something higher. By providing us with a sanctuary that harks back to nature, Damon Freed succeeds in reminding us of what is still available if one only bothers to take the time to notice.

--Nancy K. Weant



**Nancy K. Weant** is an art historian and an adjunct lecturer in the Art and Design Department at the University of Central Missouri in Warrensburg, Missouri. She is a frequent contributor to Review Magazine, Kansas City. This essay is one in a series of the gallery's exhibitions written by fellow gallery artists and friends.

Images:

**Danson Plum.**, 2008, Acrylic on canvas, 21 x 21 inches.

**Damon Freed** in his studio, Missouri.

## ABOUT THE GALLERY

Bruno David Gallery is a contemporary art gallery and one of the most important places to see art in Saint Louis. The Gallery represents some of the best artists that Saint Louis has to offer, along with artists of national and international reputation. The editors of the St. Louis Magazine awarded the Gallery: *Best Gallery in St. Louis* in 2008. The gallery is located in the heart of the Grand Center arts district, directly opposite the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis.

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