

## REVIEW

JACQUELINE EHLIS' *FLUSH, POISE, AND IMMERSE* AT NAAU.

## A SUMMER SERENADE

At New American Art Union, Jacqueline Ehlis shines in one of the year's best shows.

It takes a certain worldliness to be droll and dead serious at the same time. Jacqueline Ehlis' *Serenade* at New American Art Union excels at such cosmopolitan paradoxes, mixing minimalist and pop elements into what is perhaps her most accomplished show so far. Gone are the glittery half-spheres with which the Portland-based artist dotted her 2002 show, *90 MPH*, at Savage Gallery; gone are the surfer-girl graffiti that encroached into some of her paintings in her 2005 Savage outing, *Vigor*. Ehlis is still accelerating vigorously, but she's stripped down the elements in her visual vocabulary, even as she has multiplied the conceptual implications. In her diptych, *Cinema of the Blushing Skin*, she paints the edges of her canvases DayGlo yellow, fluorescent fuchsia, and shimmery silvery blue, such that the colors bleed onto the wall itself, transgressing the fourth wall of the picture plane. The paintings have additional presence, thanks to the semi-abstract slide show projected onto them by a ceiling-mounted projector. Glow, fuzzy, gee-whiz cool, the piece is Dan Flavin without the light bulbs. *Flush, Poise, and Immerse* takes this transgression into the sculptural realm, with its polished aluminum shapes emerging from rolled-up construction paper, with a steel-mounted canvas beneath. It looks like a hair dryer designed by Elroy Jetson. Then there are the *Delightful Exaltations*, a set of white-painted square and rectangular canvases. Over them are blond wood frames holding vinyl paper of the cheap, garish sort you see on high-school lockers and motorcycle ads. Resting atop them are mirrors reclining languidly against the wall.

What hath Ehlis wrought? Her *Serenade* manages to be lyrical and contrapuntal at the same time. This is an artist who is witty but not snarky, smart but not divorced from the senses. She's also increasingly spartan in her sensibility yet never unaware of her work's ability to please as well as pique. Her work stands at the crossroads of painting, sculpture and new media—and she makes this hodgepodge work via ever-unfolding layers of implication and overtone and a spectacular perfection of execution. What Ehlis is doing has nothing to do with "Northwest art," nor with any school or trend anywhere; her concern is the relationship of one form to another, and of their aggregate impact upon the viewer. If you have a pair of eyes and a brain, you owe it to yourself to see this thoughtful, jubilant tour de force of a show. RICHARD SPEER.

**SEE:** Jacqueline Ehlis at New American Art Union, 922 SE Ankeny St., 231-8294. Closes Aug. 10.