

On one level, these mostly autumnal landscapes recall and induce a kind of train-ride reverie, lulling and reassuring with their views of forest, meadow and river. But the interplay of focus and blur, stillness and motion, is joined by other doublings. Several works are vertical diptychs, with an upside-down view rippling below. What could

definition here recalls Gerhard Richter—both his blurred, photograph-based paintings and his squeegeed abstractions—but the resemblance only goes so far. Where Richter's work seems to be about some cultural loss of focus, Neff's half-veiled images feel like elegies to lost stability, or essays on the anxiety of motion. In contrast to the exhilaration in speed of, say, some of Nam June Paik's video work, here a condition of pervasive acceleration is soberly contemplated. The apparitional, upside-down house becomes an icon for the loss of grounding this experience engenders.

Newton's Field offers this awareness in a compositionally stark, though visually rich equation. A stand of deep-green bushes in a field of grass, crisp with a pre-storm, ozone-saturated anticipation, is backed by a slur of speed-bleared tree forms. More Einsteinian than Newtonian, this thought-experiment of a picture seems to lay bare the gap between quantum realities and our desire for ordinary material perception.

The mural-sized, green and azure *Spring Seen* dares to be pretty, and with its clouds of scumbled green, advances a kind of nostalgia for prettiness. In fact, many of these works are beautiful, and in the midst of their destabilizing effects, quietly assert the power of landscape to move us still.

—Miriam Seidel

CHICAGO

John Phillips at Bodybuilder & Sportsman

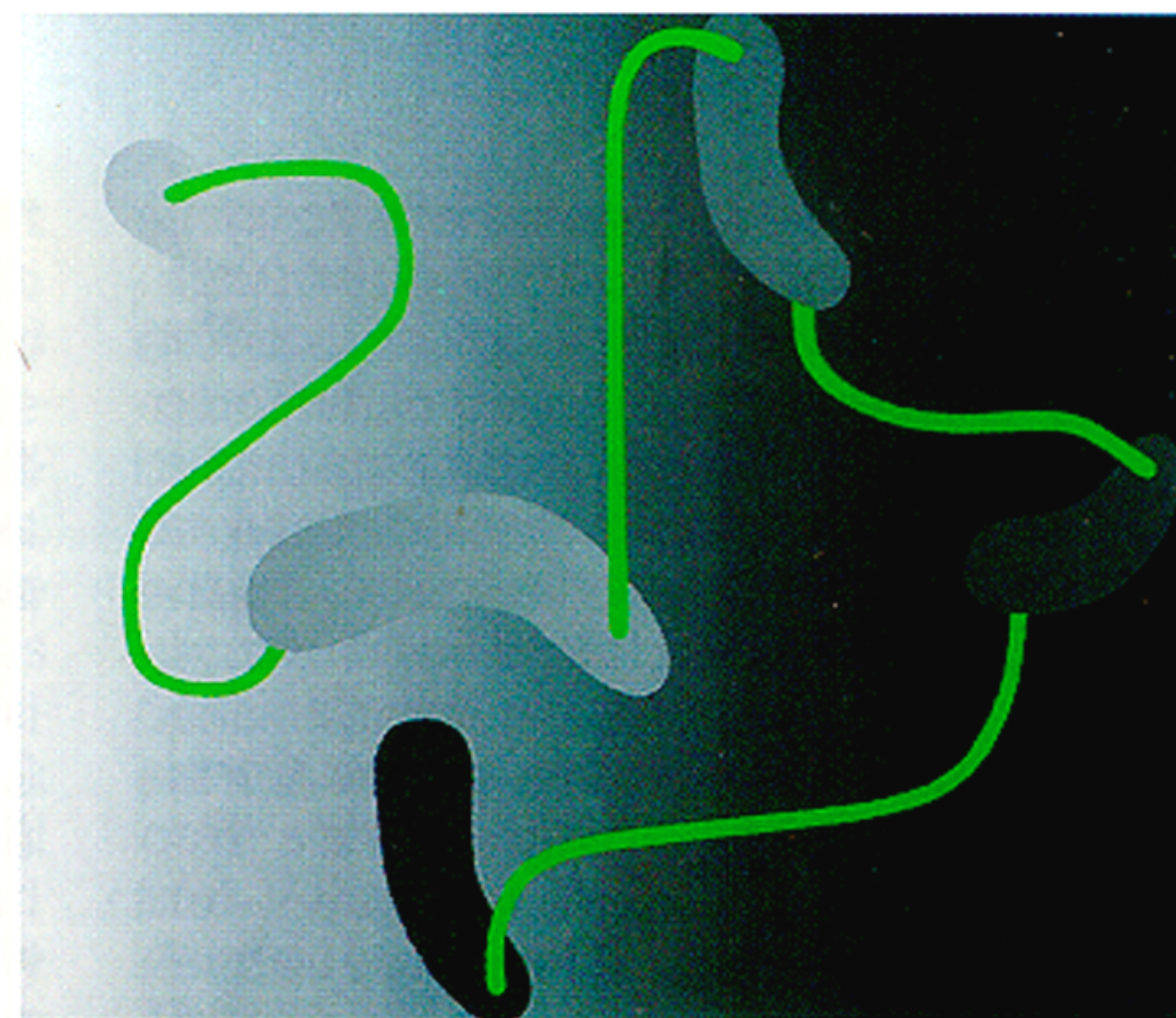
Painter John Phillips is a consummate formalist and a bit of a sentimentalist. Throughout his career, Phillips has mined the history of abstract painting, working with a visual vocabulary that pays homage to artists like Ellsworth Kelly, Brice Marden and Barnett Newman, while simultaneously imbuing abstraction with his own offbeat lyricism.

A fusion of Pop and minimalist sensibilities, Phillips's paintings embrace bright, idiosyncratic colors, cool surfaces, bold lines and flat shapes. Past works often contained the artist's signature scroll or ribbon

motif, rendered as black, serpentine grids against expansive monochromatic planes. In four new paintings comprising his recent solo show, ribbons give way to a system of lines and ovoid shapes contained within large geometric fields of color. Although not officially part of the show, some earlier works were on view in the gallery's back room, including one "ribbon" painting and five small panel pieces whose tactile surfaces, built from thin layers of oil and wax, are punctuated by calligraphic arcs and cartoony squiggles.

Phillips first composes his arrangements using design software, then executes them in oils on rectangular canvases and circular panels. Although his compositions retain the flatness of the computer screen, they are transformed into dynamic explorations of color and perception. In each, the artist's quirky, geometric forms are interconnected by a network of colorful, sinuous lines that function both as grids and as optical foils that disrupt the pictorial space. In *Back Talk* (2002), a series of irregular spheres rendered in a limited range of soft grays is contrasted with a field seamlessly painted in gradations of the same hue. Within this restrained palette, subtle and not so subtle differences emerge from the same set of colors; light gray on top of dark gray creates a sense of illusionistic space, while image and background painted in similar tonalities reinforce the flatness of the picture plane. A Day-Glo green line linking the spheroid forms adds movement and heightens the formal tensions at play.

Similar investigations are carried out in *Having Little Heart Attacks for You* (2001), in which bubble-gum-pink pods and luscious red wiggles form staccato notations within a rectangular field of ivory



John Phillips: *Back Talk*, 2002, oil on canvas, 67 by 78 inches; at Bodybuilder & Sportsman.

and cream, and in an untitled work from 2002, where odd ovals rendered in shades of coral, beige and peach occupy a pale blue ground. Phillips's deceptively simple paintings, always pleasing to the eye, deftly balance color, form and space, reflecting the artist's impassioned reverence for his medium and subject.

—Susan Snodgrass

Peter Stanfield at Zolla/Lieberman

Peter Stanfield has fallen in love with his materials and his craft. He builds box-shaped, wall-hung, plastic and aluminum constructions, usually comprising two connected parts. We see fanciful texts in frames, dye-filled glass vials illuminated from behind, and dainty electric switches and off-on indicator lights. Rods, nuts, bolts, Phillips-head screws and other reinforcing devices hold these elegant constructions together. Stanfield's work is a joy to behold.

Stanfield writes his own texts, which are indebted to Jorge Luis Borges and John Barth. Once he gets an idea, art making and writing express the same mood and move forward together. The artist says he can "doodle sculptures all day," but writing is a "slow, difficult process."

Moon in a Cup (2002) is a small, vertical, two-box construction with the upper unit made of walnut and the lower one of aluminum where the text is displayed in a frame. The walnut box has a window through which we see three glass vials on a shelf lit from behind. Each vial contains greenish dye and a single electronic component. Below the window is a square brushed-aluminum plate

Peter Stanfield: *Moon in a Cup*, 2002, mixed mediums, 13 by 4 by 4 inches; at Zolla/Lieberman.

read as a scene reflected in water is, in every case, slightly off from the upper view. *Night Falls*, the show's most painterly image, contrasts a twilight woods scene above with an amber smear of sun-glare below, manifestly from a different time of day. (Like all the works, this one took on an individual size and shape—here a narrow quadrilateral over 9 feet long—that felt informed by Neff's years of calibrating photos and objects in her installation works.)

In *Almost (November 21, 2000)*, the lower, "reflected" woods scene reveals a half-hidden, upside-down white house where there is none above. The paired tree-scales in *Almost (No. 3)*, heavily streaked and flanked above and below by sky, feel entirely untethered, a fast-moving, flying island. The loss of

Eileen Neff: *Newton's Field*, 2001, C-print, 44 by 64 1/2 inches; at Locks.

