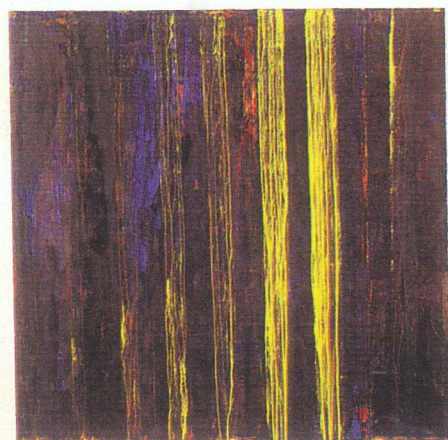
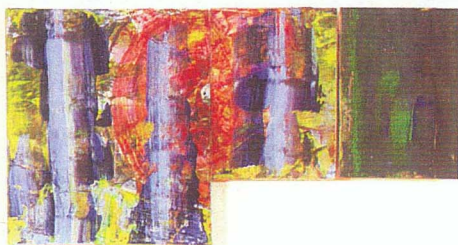


THE COLOURS OF JAMIE DALGLISH

Frederick Ted Castle



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There must be something the matter with the way I see the paintings of Jamie Dalglish and maybe I know what it is what I see is colour where others see confusion, or disorder, or reckless abandonment of sense. Jamie Dalglish creates dismay or at least a little disorientation in the minds of his audience, a word I choose carefully here; when you see the paintings you almost hear them. Still, what I see I insist on calling colours spelt in the more colourful English style, not chords, rhythm or other musical metaphors however appropriate they may be Dalglish himself refers to harmonic proportion and is a great fan of several kinds of music. He has even written songs, twenty years ago, when he had a musical group called Container that played at such spots as The Kitchen. I like the idea of a container in regard to Dalglish's paintings. First of all, they are uniquely constructed out of strips of the finest birch veneer plywood attached to the wall by means of cleats, wood strips on the back of the painting panels that hang on a corresponding strip attached to the wall. Dalglish invented this system when he had a bad back and could not maneuver large paintings himself, but they have become the backbone of his art. The typically eight inch wide and eight foot long panels are perfectly flat and smooth which makes them perfect for the technique he uses; he puts paint on a surface and scrapes most of it off. He does this many times, with different colours of acrylic paint mixed with a gel medium with which he controls the intensity of the colour and the opacity of the paint. Sometimes it is possible to glimpse the actual birchwood surface, but usually not. Sometimes after he scrapes off the paint there is still a thick impasto remaining on the board, but usually the paint is very thin and smooth. Once in a while he puts other things such as gold powder into the mix, but most of the time it is simply acrylic paint and gel medium. The results are always brilliant even if, as in one called *Moonlight in the Pines* (1997), the predominant colour is black. Dalglish had his most recent show in an almost defunct SoHo gallery

called Novart which a week after the show closed disappeared completely. The work was jammed into the space even a closet was utilized somehow. However three relatively small paintings caught my eye. Under the general title *Incapsulated Morphoglyphs*, they are called *Night Phosphor*, *Day Phosphor* and *Pink Phosphor*. Each 38" square, they have different predominating colours. Phosphor is a Greek word for what is called the morning star, the harbinger of daylight. Very curiously, they are each surmounted with a few (three, four and five) very small panels which are not included in the measurements or the checklist, which Jamie said were part of the near below but not adjacent phosphors. One should always spend a lot of time with a Dalglish work, and I would like to have spent more time with these small works.

I think the masterpiece in the show is *Deep River* (2001). Composed with many colours, and including thick impasto as well as lean scraped passages, the painting is eight feet high and nearly ten feet wide (114"). One could spend a lifetime with this picture and probably not have completely comprehended it, which is also true of a deep river such as the Hudson or the Rhine. There is nothing particularly riverine about the painting in a superficial sense, but it is clearly deep and composed of dangerous eddies and major currents, shellfish, bass, shad, trout and catfish, rotting and rusting hulks of sundered dreams, a whole ecosystem of plantlife and garbage, waterfowl and mud and what not else. Above all it is full of the most beautiful colours in gorgeous shapes. It is this water, if you will, that makes it a great painting. Jamie Dalglish is one of the most underestimated of New York artists. He has been showing since 1980, including three shows at Ivan Karp's O. K. Harris Gallery on West Broadway. I think that Dalglish's work frightens people, or somehow hints at the vastness and incomprehensibility of life in ways that art lovers prefer to ignore. I really don't understand it because I think his work is beauty in pure colour without metaphor. □

Jamie Dalglish,
Night Phosphor, 2000.
acrylic on Birch Panels,
62" x 38".

Below: "Deep River," Jamie Dalglish, 96" x 114". Mentioned in the last paragraph of the Castle review above.

