

SEAN SCHERER

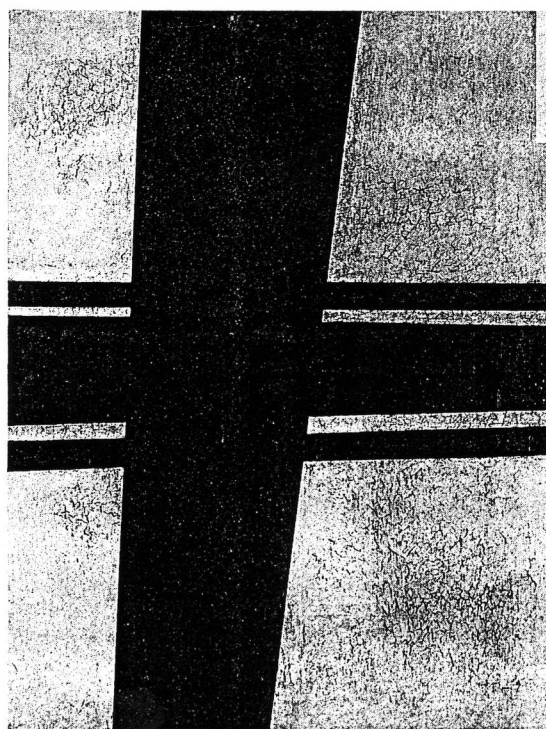
Stux

In the past several years, contemporary painters have increasingly made nostalgic references to chapters from the annals of Western art. Indeed, these backward glances often sharpen the art world's dialogue with the present. Neo-Expressionism, for example, acted as an emotional antidote to the coolness of Minimalism and nonmaterial art. More recently, a spate of Neo-Romantic landscape painters have raised questions about both the craft of painting and nature itself. So perhaps it's not surprising in today's climate of pluralism and political passion that Bauhaus art, Suprematism, and Constructivism should re-emerge as well.

The attractiveness of Sean Scherer's abstract paintings rests in part with their familiarity. These primarily monochromatic canvases, with their simple distorted geometry, immediately recall the modernism of artists as diverse as Rodchenko, Mondrian, and Nicholson, and uncannily evoke the same powerful balance of color, form, and composition that one finds in the work of these pioneering abstractionists. The hues

and shapes of *Shards* are wonderfully repetitive and powerful. Triangles of black break into the center from right and left, covering a field that is broken into pieces of yellow-ivory and white. The beige and off-white plane of *Ostracism* is vigorously cut with angled lines. And *Rim*, with its distended oblongs of black and white teetering solidly against a red background, has all the tension of an early Stuart Davis.

But this young (22-year-old) artist is not just naively mimicking modern masters. His skillful abstractions are riddled with the fine crackles and distressed surfaces that one might see in a Malevich that hangs in a museum today. This is faux modernism, rendered attractively antique. Acting as icons of an era when abstraction was new and modernism spelled progress, Scherer's paintings, in their purposefully deteriorated state, become, curiously, as critical as they are exemplary. —F. D. V.



Sean Scherer, *Ostracism*, 1990, oil and wax on canvas, 48 by 36 inches. Stux.