

View From the Top: A Review of “50 Paintings” at the Milwaukee Art Museum

BY RAFAEL FRANCISCO SALAS | DECEMBER 20, 2023



Rao Fu (Chinese, b. 1978), “Inevitable III,” 2019. Oil on canvas. 36 × 48 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Fergus McCahey, New York/Image: Rao Fu and Fergus McCahey, New York

Andera and Grabner push more expansively in their curation as well. Rao Fu creates tension between abstraction and landscape in “Inevitable III.” What may be a mountain landscape expands into heightened, sun-flared neo-expressionist brushwork, creating slippage between thought and action. I returned to this painting again and again, bound in its mystery.

Another painting that rewards exploration is Torkwase Dyson’s “Memory (Liquid a Place).” Her working theory in creating “Black Compositional Thought,” which posits that thoroughways, water, architecture and geographies—are all composed and inhabited by Black bodies, presents itself as a layered, mixed black-and-blue sculptural arc. The composition is a minimalist gesture coated on the bottom with graphite, pulling the arc downward like a lead weight. Torkwase’s painting requires more opportunity for contemplation than is afforded here. The painting simply demands more space for itself to be fully realized.