

# Art in America

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## Dan Kuhne and Madeleine Keesing at Maryland Art Place

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In 1973 Dan Kuhne had a one-man show at the Phillips Collection, an impressive venue. Back then he was considered a third-generation Color School painter, a member of the waning movement that had included Ken Noland, Morris Louis and Howard Mehring, among others, which was D.C.'s contribution to postwar world art. Kuhne dropped out of sight for a while, causing some to think that he was just another flash in the pan--but this was not the case. What he had done was reinvent himself; he turned his wild brush to nature, more specifically to sky, trees and water. This recent exhibition proved that the turn was brave and fortunate.

Sunset (1999) shows us why: with tornado brush, the pigment--at once rushed and crayon dry--sets the painted trees a-burning over the fiery water. Every one of these large works has a roiling, Turner-esque passion. The Tree-Tops (1999) gives us vibrant orange, as we hover over the roaring water in sketchy vertigo. Ghostly light nestles in the maple that frames the right side of Fall Fanfare (1999). Made with a surprising variety of strokes, most of the works tend to vigorously twirl towards a spectral center.

The romantic expressionism of Kuhne's landscapes contrasts sharply with the work of Madeleine Keesing, whose formalist abstract painting is almost sculptural. She applies intense, obsessive and meticulous horizontal ropes of paint; the shallow relief adds weight and presence to the austere compositions. Blue (1998) has a kind of subterranean geology, with the relief bands in a vibrant, almost-black blue. Between and behind them background tones show through--algae green, glowing vermilion. Only the colors change from work to work; everything else remains the same. To see the baroque swirl of Kuhne's landscapes in counterpoint to the stern discipline of Keesing's smoldering fields was quite a memorable experience.