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Tom Lieber - abstractionist's art looks alive

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Stroke for stroke, Tom Lieber paints as well as any abstractionist out there. But he still struggles to pull paintings together, as his recent work at Dolby Chadwick demonstrates.

Or perhaps his paintings show us an artist honestly at odds with his own facility or taste, and aware of mannerism as a pitfall that, even after 40 years' experience, he cannot always avoid.

In any case, the unstrung quality of Lieber's best pictures, such as "Valley" (2010), "Chief" (2010) and "Descend/Ascend" (2010), puts him in a good place at the moment.

The loopy suavity of his paintings recalls Hans Hartung (1904-89) and other School of Paris luminaries in whom interest has reawakened lately.

By its lack of clear resolution, Lieber's work fends off the sort of closure that makes improvisational painting appear fatally convention-bound.

Admire it or not, Lieber's painting looks alive, no mean feat in an idiom whose credibility had come into question even before his career began.

Tom Lieber, Valley, 2010, oil on canvas, 72" x 60"
Photographed by ira schrank