



Chris Kahler: *Hybrid Dynamics A-5*, 2009  
acrylic and gel medium on panel, 36 x 48 inches:  
at Bruno David Gallery

ST. LOUIS  
**CHRIS KAHLER**  
BRUNO DAVID

In Chris Kahler's new multilayered paintings (all 2009), linear networks face off against riotous stews of color, striking an energetic equilibrium. While they extend concerns that have occupied the artist throughout his career, the 10 large pieces in "Hybrid Dynamic" represent the densest and most ambitious work Kahler has produced to date.

*Hybrid Dynamics A-5* juxtaposes a section of lurid blue-green lines that look like a road map with a fan-shaped spread of magenta spokes, all swimming in an oily-looking multicolored phosphorescence. In *Hybrid Suspension*, arcs and diagonals evocative of a suspension bridge traverse a Matta-esque "inscape." *Dynamic Hybrid A-1* is an expansive (6-by-8-foot) explosion of ruby red clouds punctuated by glowing yellow pockmarks and inky black rivulets.

*Bionica*, the enormous painting on paper (the rest are on panel) that anchors this show, comprises an encyclopedia of Kahler's visual effects. The 5-by-20-foot

field unfurls in a spectacular panorama of colored froth and veins suspended in a candy-pink ether. While an overall clarity prevails, there are passages—particularly the dark areas at each end—that were obviously born of a struggle, resulting in some muddy moments.

These paintings are the product of repeatedly layering acrylics and oils, then working back into the emergent forms with more paint and acrylic gel. Given the protracted nature of his process, Kahler's greatest achievement may be knowing when to quit, which he does, achieving a restless balance between opposing forces: acrid versus organic colors, billowing nebulae hemmed in by sober cartographics. In the midst of all this, visual paradoxes abound—what looks like a top layer turns out to be part of a painting's foundation, while positive and negative forms perform repeated switchbacks.

In reproduction, Kahler's works bear comparison to Matthew Ritchie's; both make use of architectonics and roiling atmospheres, visual corollaries of biology and quantum physics. (Kahler's previous exhibitions were titled "Viral" and "Interconnectivity.") But in the flesh Kahler's paintings are distinguished from Ritchie's slick choreography by their painterly incidents and accidents, and by Kahler's obviously CAD-less, thoroughly intuitive process. And while they aren't all that far removed from illustrations of chaos and information theory, the artist remains a painter's painter, entrenched in the medium's history, from old-master oils to Op art's visual trickery.

—Ivy Cooper

ABOUT THE BRUNO DAVID GALLERY

Bruno David Gallery, St. Louis' leading art gallery specializing in contemporary art and one of the most important places to see art in Saint Louis. The Gallery represents some of the best artists that Saint Louis has to offer, along with artists of national and international reputation. Located in a stunningly renovated industrial building in the Grand Center arts district, directly opposite the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts and the Contemporary Art Museum St. Louis. Bruno David Gallery's art program has introduced new contemporary art to local gallery goers, and has been discussed in important art publications including, Art in America, Art Papers, ArtNet Magazine.