

An abstract painting featuring a large, vibrant yellow circle in the upper left quadrant, set against a textured, light green background. To the right of the circle is a large, solid red triangle that points upwards. The bottom of the painting is a dark red, horizontal band. The overall style is minimalist and geometric, with visible brushstrokes and a slightly grainy texture.

Geometry and the Sea

Paul Resika



Resika's Studio, 2017 Photo: Steven Harvey

PAUL RESIKA
Geometry and the Sea

April 18th - May 20th, 2018

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presented in association
with an exhibition at
Bookstein Projects
60 east 66th Street



Ascent (Sail and Half Moon)
2009 oil on canvas 51 x 38 inches

When I first saw these paintings last summer in Paul Resika's studio on Cape Cod, I told him almost immediately that I wanted to show them. There was something so clear, so resolved as to create their own definite "set." Except for the moon and the sea, the shapes are ambiguous. Are they dunes, sails or pyramids? The moon and the sea are there but what is going on in the foreground? We argued about that. The idea of pyramids was alien to his conception of space in the backshore of Cape Cod. But nonetheless it must be considered. His shapes are like magic crystals in the Sinai. But they are more like architecture than still life, so they may be seen as pyramids. A few years ago he painted psychedelic curving tree shapes on a metaphysical island in Maine. In Paul's hands the landscape is a magic land. Moby Dick surfaces, looking sly and desperate. A voluptuous conch communes with the moon. There he is, weathered, white-haired, immersed in aqua, under an orange moon, alert, ready with rag in hand, to erase and begin again. The soul of painting is in Paul Resika.

—Steven Harvey
March 2018



Blue
2017 oil on canvas 38 x 51 inches



A Quiet Romance
2017 oil on canvas 28 x 24 inches



Celadon Sea
2017 oil on canvas 36 x 48 inches



Triangle-Sun
2017 oil on canvas 48 x 40 inches



The White Moon
2017 oil on canvas 40 x 48 inches

Paragraph for Paul Resika

by Richard Milazzo

In the taxi heading home, I found myself reflecting on Paul Resika's images of abstract forms languishing in abstract spaces, which Steven Harvey had just scrolled for me on his computer – paintings sparingly filled with colorful triangular shapes, in the vicinity of which orbs of yellow or white paint depend from a spectrum of celadon and cobalt blue skies, meant to evoke his signature sailboats sailing across sun-drenched afternoons or moonlit nights in Provincetown, where Resika lives part of the year. Steven, in fact, informed me that he lives in a charming, old, Mediterranean-style villa on a hillside from where he can almost see the water lapping up to the stars. Who knew the midi light of Provence might stretch across oceans and seas to reach the shores of this tiny enclave at land's end? But, of course, precisely because the shapes are abstract, I begin to hallucinate not only Matisse's feral forms and colors derived from the promiscuous southern light of Corsica and Collioure but also the pyramids of Cairo, embedded in vast expanses of desert sand, lingering suddenly in the exotic port city of Alexandria, with the moon shining down on the Mediterranean and the shutters of our room at the Cecil Hotel thrown open to the

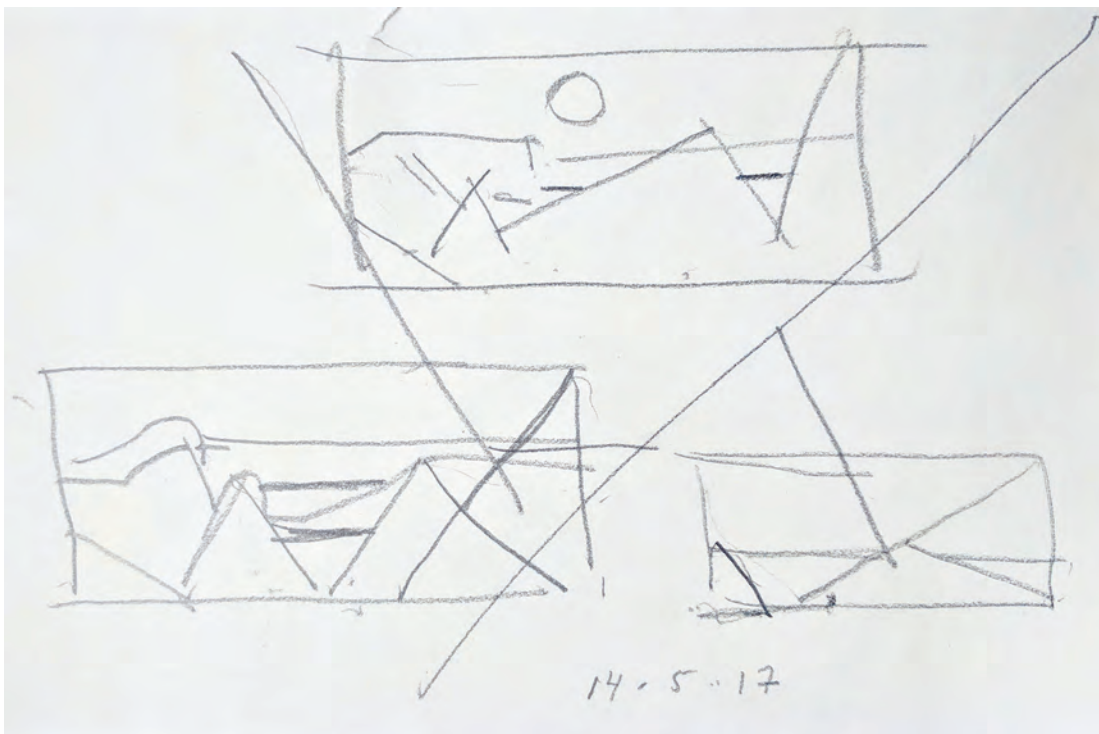
white-washed corniche just below and the feral crash of sea waves so close, so rapacious, it adjudicates an unfathomable poetry of curtains swirling wildly in the breeze, throwing themselves (these unconscionable waves) ultimately at my feet, poised upward unabashedly on the railing! I have always loved getting it wrong, especially when it comes to abstract pictures, from which I have derived unearthly pleasure violating them with my impure thoughts! And so, before you know it, rather than referencing Hans Hofmann's colors and forms pushing and pulling, ebbing and flowing in a distant sea of theoretical colors, long ago influencing Resika's pictures, instead Henri Rousseau's *The Sleeping Gypsy* (1897) floats up involuntarily to the shores of my consciousness like a piece of driftwood, but whose very embodiment in the form of the supine and sublime "negress" or gypsy is so much more colorful. As we race perilously down the streets of the East Village, for no obvious reason I can think of, I recall the geometricized, Cubistic figure of the gypsy lying along the beach or desert with a sea or river somewhere nearby, a star-studded deep blue sky, and a light-infused moon blazing overhead. However, I forget the hills or low-lying mountains glistening in the moonlight and lining the opposite shore, the mandolin whose strings reiterate the musical or geometrical patterns and rhythms of the gypsy's colorful costume and pillow, the water jug, and, bizarrely enough, the lion lingering nearby! What do you expect from a make-believe art historian?! Not that I have also forgotten the walking stick she is clutching in her hand; that had more to do with suppressing the realities of my own life. But, on the other hand, how can one not discern Rousseauian resemblances in Resika's nighttime pictures with moons hovering above and the overall harmonious configuration of abstract shapes in metaphysical isolation floating in vast expanses of space? One would have to be blind or overeducated not to see them. How lovely it is to erroneously associate Resika's colorful, reductive (Cartesian) forms lost at sea, but watched over by clear-eyed suns and moons at twilight, with the pyramids of Egypt lying in the

endless sands of the desert! A far cry from the ruins in Shelley's Ozymandias! To see in the arc of Resika's *Moby Dick* and *A Quiet Romance* the metaphysical struggle between nascent formlessness and the secret intimacy of form, to relate the poetic simplicity of the forms in Resika to those in Rousseau (hardly naïve), does not seem altogether reckless on my part, although I could not say the same for the driver who almost just killed the both of us! Resika is right: better to drift away at sea, to lose ourselves in the angular, blue, moonlit shadows of the night, even to be devoured whole by Melville's creature – which I have always taken to be a sublimation of Hobbes's Leviathan – or by mythological forms of the imagination inspired by an analytic-synthetic geometrics, than to fall prey to the so-called safe, distinct spaces of a purely representational or purely abstract world. Are we not all, each of us, mongrels, hybridized by the Homeric sirens of the sea, where parallel lines (the imaginary world and the so-called real one) intersect, if not collide, synthetically (romantically) in a non Euclidean universe? Now I get it: the driver mistook the green light for a celadon sea; the yellow, for the sun or the moon; the red, for an impassioned enigma, a hallucinogenic vision, channeling the Sphinx in the Egyptian desert! Does it matter that we outliers here must thrive in the customary cold, sharp, white, North light raking the soul as a threshold moment within any given perception?

New York City, March 24-26, 2018



Self-Portrait with Rag
2017 oil on canvas 36 x 28 inches



Untitled 14.5.17
2017 graphite on paper 5 x 8½ inches

FRONT COVER:
Triangle—Sun
2017 oil on canvas 48 x 40 inches

BACK COVER:
Moby Dick
2017 oil on canvas 40 x 30 inches

