

## In the Abstract, Lots to Consider

By Jerry Cullum  
For the Journal-Constitution

Honnie Goode and Oliver Smith are both visual poets of the scuffed and scraped surface. The ex-Atlantan and current Atlanta artist share a love of well-positioned cracks, marks and erosions in a painted panel that, while quiet, is anything but well-behaved. There is more going on in these abstract paintings than in many canvases devoted to historical narrative.

Smith, however, seems more drawn to overt symbolism, while Goode simply explores exquisite accidents. Smith's works recall images of subatomic particles in one case, or viruses or chromosomes in others. Goode's beautifully cracked and pitted surfaces sometimes resemble aerial photographs of such things as dry riverbeds or estuaries, but in both artists the details of color and texture count for more than the associative references. Goode's palette is a bit less restricted than Smith's contrasts of pastels with darker shades and tones, but both tend toward subdued harmonies rather than the blatant cheeriness of so much contemporary abstraction.

Smith carves or incises his lines into wood panels and applies and removes oil paint in a succession of layers that are sanded and scraped to produce extraordinary effects. Goode layers paint as well, but is more likely to create disturbed swirls and puddles that retain the outlines of burst bubbles and other residue of a vigorous yet singularly meditative process.

Both artists produce remarkably quiet and reflective paintings that emerge from downright aggressive careful and slow physical process. As with Rainer Gross' different version of disrupted layering (currently on view at Marcia Wood Gallery), one could probably draw all kinds of psychological parallels, but they would be misleading and unnecessary.

These are paintings first and foremost, not allegories for mental processes, but both Goode and Smith affirm a link between their visual language and their inner life. Smith states that it's "important to quiet the rational mind, open one's eyes and be willing to go where explanations are not required." Goode asserts that her art is her ritual and her life, her means of exploring "the interaction between the internal and external, the rational and the emotional." Their paintings perform exactly the same functions for the sufficiently aware viewer.