

**MIND
AND
MATTER**

**NEW
AMERICAN
ABSTRACTION**

Leslie Luebbers

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YOUNG JUNE P. LEW

"Action Painting" is always, in some respect, about creation. Perhaps we are too sophisticated to subscribe to notions of divine inspiration or creative muses, but the heroic legends surrounding that branch of American painting participated in a traditional attitude about artistic inspiration going back to ancient civilizations. These irresistible impulses were visited almost exclusively on male artists, and the language to describe them frequently employed combat metaphors. Women artists apparently bought the modernized myths, because few, if any, Abstract Expressionist women painters avoided prettified and domesticated variants.

Thus, it is a surprise to encounter Young June P. Lew's abstract paintings of commanding power and epic scale. While discussions of her work tend to evoke images of a childhood in Korea — translucent rice paper screens, colorful laundry flapping on a line, mountain skylines — pretty and domestic visions, to be sure, its impact is in a sensation of vigorous physical performance and intense emotion. Thrusting black forms vibrate against fields of nervously repetitive gesture accentuated by erasures. The light admitted by erasing illuminates veils of color or grey faintly outlined in black. The result is a striking relationship between atmosphere and form, transparency and opacity, weightlessness and mass, and the relationship is revealed as one of dynamic continuity. That these formal considerations arise



directly from personal references, whether or not readable to the viewers, give emotional power to Young June P. Lew's compositions. Her pictorial philosophy, with its sense of space, calligraphic line and its striving for essences, reveals the degree to which Abstract Expressionism is indebted to Asian sources, and the scale and amplitude of expression attests to her American experience, but one free of the masculine creation myths propagated by Action Painting.

Light & Mass Series
1985
Oil crayon on rice
paper on canvas
132 cm x 200.6 cm
(52" x 79")
Lent by the artist