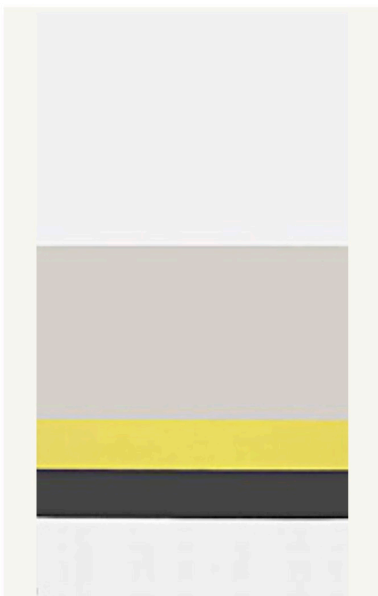




**John McLaughlin**  
*L-1958*  
1958  
Greenberg Van Doren Gallery



**John McLaughlin**  
*V-1958*  
1958  
Greenberg Van Doren Gallery

## MCLAUGHLIN REDISCOVERED

by N.F. Karlins

Sometimes you look at a painting. And sometimes a painting looks at you. At least it seems like it. I felt that way admiring [John McLaughlin's \*L-1958\*](#) at the Greenberg Van Doren Gallery.

*L-1958* is a geometric abstraction, one of 14 by the late California-based McLaughlin in the exhibition, "John McLaughlin: Hard Edge Classicist Paintings from the 1950s to the 1970s."

What's intriguing about this work (which I believe stared at me as much as I stared at it) is that it never sits still. The proportions of the black areas and their relationship to the pair of adjacent similarly sized but slightly varied red patches keep the whole work in a subtle, never-ending state of disequilibrium.

Looking at this oil left me feeling like I had recently disembarked from a long ship voyage over roiling waters. The hard edges of the piece weren't rigid after all. Quite a trick.

This painting -- and several others, like *Untitled* (1952) -- is concocted so that it exerts a yin-yang pull on the viewer. This isn't particularly surprising once you learn that McLaughlin spent several years in Japan, spoke Japanese and was a dealer in Japanese prints before becoming an artist.

John McLaughlin has later works in the show that seem more settled, more clarified and stable. The press release mentions 15th-century Japanese brush painting, Russian Constructivism and Piet Mondrian as influences. The small-scale monumentality seen in works by Russian artist [Kazimir Malevich](#) and McLaughlin's own Zen spirit take over after the mid-'60s. Neutrals, especially grays, become his palette of choice, and the paintings are even sparer, becoming Minimalist.

It's terrific that McLaughlin's work, which typically is better known in California than New York, is being shown here again. You might find it doing strange and wonderful things to you, too.

"John McLaughlin: Hard Edge Classicist Paintings from the 1950s to the 1970s," Jan. 7-Feb. 13, 2010, at Greenberg Van Doren Gallery, 730 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10019

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