

ART & MUSEUMS

News & reviews

[Christopher Knight](#)[Christopher Hawthorne](#)[More Architecture](#)[ART & MUSEUMS](#)[BOOKS & TALKS](#)[FAMILY & FESTIVALS](#)[MOVIES](#)[MUSIC](#)[NIGHT LIFE](#)[RESTAURANTS](#)[THEATER & DANCE](#)[TV & RADIO](#)[Daily Calendar](#)[Calendar Weekend](#)[Sunday Calendar](#)[Entertainment Briefs](#)[Weather: 5-day](#)[Check Traffic](#)[Make a Reservation](#)[Dating / Personals](#)[Map it! / Get directions](#)[Contact Us](#)

PARTNERS



MARKETPLACE

classifieds and

- Careers
- Cars
- Homes
- Rentals
- Times Guides
- Recycler.com
- Newspaper Ads
- Grocery Coupons
- Personals

AROUND THE GALLERIES

Modern experience, dissected 11 ways

■ Doug Aitken grapples with tough questions at Regen Projects. And more.

By Christopher Knight, Times Staff Writer, Times Staff Writer

Possibilities at play in fields of color

Joe Novak is an unabashed Color Field painter. His paintings and aquatints at Bert Green Fine Arts — the Santa Fe artist's third show there — feature works that will call to mind abstractions as diverse as those by Helen Frankenthaler, Mark Rothko and Morris Louis and the landscape abstractions of Joe Goode.

The show surveys a dozen canvases from the last 18 years. The most dynamic is "Libica" (1997), which can be described in two ways. It's either a burst of shimmering golden atmosphere from within a dark amorphous plane or a dark cloud encroaching from the edges to swallow up a field of shifting light. Novak's best works revel in this sort of ambiguity, in which allusions to creation and destruction balance on a knife edge.

The paintings are made by diluting acrylic paint and applying it to a wet surface, then manipulating the canvas or the paint using a relatively dry brush. "Libica" — the title suggests an Arabic reference to Lybia — is not an illustration of some celestial phenomenon but instead asserts itself as a vivid chromatic form that has found its shape through a combination of natural accident and human intercession.

This is a difficult feat to pull off, and a few of the paintings feel inert. (The smoke drawings, in which candle-soot creates the tornado- and thundercloud-like images on the paper, seem like old-fashioned Surrealist tropes.) The more uniformly uncanny works are several beautiful aquatints, made with multiple printing plates that somehow merge atmospheric halations of color in a way that makes each hue distinct, transparent and inseparable from the others — all at once.

Bert Green Fine Art, 102 W. 5th St., (213) 624-6212, through Nov. 19. Closed Sundays and Mondays.
[www.bgfa.us](#)



'Libica'
(Bert Green Fine Art)

