

June 2012

Louise Belcourt

Jeff Bailey

Stacked blocks of creamy color populated the mostly small-scale oil paintings in Louise Belcourt's exhibition, "Mounds." Belcourts has stated that these works, all from 2011 and 2012, were inspired by sculpture and the landscape, and the bends and curves of her luscious works reinforce their sculptural underpinnings. The chunky shapes recall everything from buildings to boxes, mountains and appliances, and when piled in Guston-like heaps, they become mini-worlds open to myriad interpretations despite the consistency of image and color.



Louise Belcourt, *Mound #9*, 2012, oil on panel, 22" x 26"

The paintings bring to mind *Brisk Landscape*, from 1916, a quasi-cubist depiction of houses, trees, and mountains by Lyubov Popova, one of the few female painters of the Russian avant-garde, as well as paintings by the precisionist Ralston Crawford. *Mound #3*, the largest painting in the show, is a tower of cube power, ascending, through subtle turns of grays, greens, and violets, to a "mound" of purple-gray perched atop the pile.

The columns of shapes and imitations of light and shadow, alternating depth and flatness, create a sense of unreality. *Mound #1* looks like a walled-in city, where the pale blue-violet on the bottom left wraps around and then reappears on the right corner, as if to hold everything in place.

Belcourt's imagery has evolved over the years, from twigs and shrubbery to almost purely abstract conglomerations of soft-edged geometry, albeit with clear references to landscape. The artist's signature buttery blues, greens, and whites remain, but now there's the occasional black rectangle in the mix. In *Mound #9* the black stretches across the top of the painting like an ominous thunder cloud about to burst open, and in *Mound #10* a vertical black dominates the top left of the painting.

Belcourt has carved a unique niche for herself in the canon of contemporary painting: the best kind, where antecedents are traceable but there's nothing that's quite the same.

- Amanda Church