

Muchnic, Suzanne, John Golf Strategies, Art Strategies, Volume 9, No. 12, Artweek, March 25, 1978, p. 7, illus.

## Los Angeles

Westchester Course, a series of new paintings and drawings by John White, is based on the game of golf. It centers on one hole at one course in Los Angeles and exposes changing moods of a single situation. White knows his subject well; he was close to pro status in the fifties and he is still an avid golfer.

The art world doesn't take kindly to establishment habits, so White catches a large dose of needling. In the days when such things bothered him, he became a closet jock. Now he plays openly and regularly – often with other artists who share his addiction. If the word gets out, the country club set may have to find another occupation.

When White switched his professional interest from golf to art, he enrolled at Otis Art Institute. A few years later he won a New Talent award at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Recently, he has built an impressive record as a performance artist. All three roles – game player, object maker and performer – mingle effectively in his new work.

Gold is White's apparent subject, but space is a major concern in his performance and painting. As a performer, he uses all available space by cutting across it, walking through it and telling stories from different locations. His paintings "tee off" from a central triangle and explode into an expansive space of abstract landscape, atmosphere and architecture.

White works on 4' x 8' sheets of Plexiglas with acrylic pigment, marking pens and Letraset. His nearly symmetrical compositions are halved, quartered and split diagonally from corner to corner. This structure serves as a matrix for soft atmospheric color and furious calligraphy.

Weather conditions, shadows, reflections, noise and physical obstructions are suggested by patches of color (green greens, blue lakes, gray clouds), linear movement and multiple planes. Active black line defines gusty winds, swirling clouds, trajectories of golf balls and edges of planes that jut out of hazy space. Tiny black letters and arrows trace the progress of each game.

In working through his series of six paintings, White passes from relatively specific shapes and high contrast to less distinct edges and close values. The last work is nearly free of linear definition and specific reference. All the paintings can be read as landscape abstractions by those who are not hip to golf, but later works are particularly subtle. They move beyond narrative content to pure abstraction and flatness. White retains solid structure of the earlier work and manages a difficult transition with ease.

Eight colored ink drawings share the paintings' symmetry and general subject matter, but they are cleaner and more precise. White defines volumes and crisp shapes with energetic, bright line on white grounds.

All things considered, White's new work is a treat. He transforms a stodgy game into an open-ended attitude that ends with a beautiful painting. The show continues through April 22 at Jan Baum. – Iris Silverman Gallery