

Geichman has the upper hand with paint

By David McCracken

In her most recent abstract paintings at the State of Illinois Gallery, Judith Geichman relies far less than before on drawing-like linear elements to order the large-scale canvases. Though still an integral component, these lines describing three-dimensional forms in space are increasingly, sometimes completely obscured by layers of wax and paint, clouds and bursts of color.

Paintings from 1990 in the far room clearly show how quickly and how far she has moved in this new direction. In the newer works, a welter of surface activity leads the eye, from seemingly random splashes and drips to broad expanses of paint pulled across the canvas as though with a large knife.

In some, such as "Dipper," waxy pigment is allowed to build up into thick clumps, alongside areas of spotty washes where the grain of the canvas shows through.

The palette is various, though muted, leaning toward earthen tones here, pale yellows and golds there. In some, such as "Samba Sagitta," there is an antique tang to the color, an impression bolstered by different faux pentimento effects, as of worn and peeling frescos.

In the best of them, Geichman's paintings are possessed of a whirling exuberance; when they don't succeed as well, it is out of overzealousness rather than caution. These works testify richly to the artist's struggle with paint and in most, Geichman has the upper hand.

The show runs through March 13 at 100 W. Randolph St.



Judith Geichman's "Punt" blurs elements under layers of paint.

GALLERY SCENE