

Dark and light juxtaposed in abstracts show

*At the Center for Contemporary Arts,
two exhibits, different purposes.*

By Victoria Donohoe
INQUIRER ART CRITIC

It's a somber theater of gestures. Action is frozen, time suspended. Each of the 15 darkling, diamond-shaped abstract paintings in Marcia Kocot and Tom Hatton's installation at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts in Wilmington seems weighted with symbolic resonance.

The deliberate absence of expressionistic drama makes these black, charcoal-textured canvases memorable and provocative. Neither so lustrous as to be truly obsessed with surface nor so symbolic that they became wincingly obvious, they possess another, altogether distinct, hybrid quality.

We don't feel comfortable with these paintings. We're not meant to. There's a menace about them. The drawing series had begun with a different theme, but when the tragedies of 9/11 struck, Kocot and Hatton redirected their energies to the compelling theme of that day's mayhem in the drawings and paintings on view here.

The artists, a husband-and-wife team from Philadelphia, over the years have thoroughly established their gait. Their paintings and 90 related drawings (also abstract), on display in their exhibit titled "Wake," catch the vocabulary of surrealism, without its immediacy.

As their work on occasion has been known to seek out the dark side of life, it is no surprise they determined to create a powerful and original image of 9/11. Kocot and Hatton in tandem represent a distinctive artistic personality — imaginative, eccentric, marginal perhaps, but armed with an engaging imagery all their own. Their two-room installation here conveys a true sense of the tragic and the beautiful.

Theirs are midnight visions dark as night in which latent anxieties surface that at once repel and fascinate.

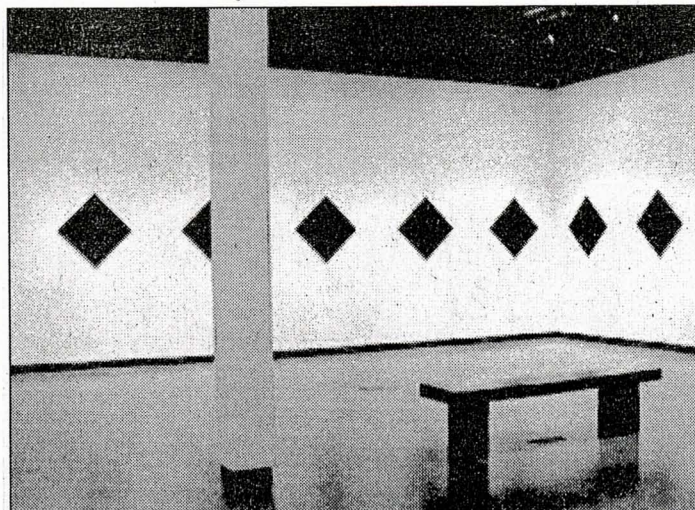
Serena Bocchino of Hoboken, another abstract-painting soloist at the Delaware Center for the Contemporary Arts, shows work as lighthearted and lyrical as Kocot and Hatton's is somber.

An exhibitor since 1990, Bocchino has attracted attention and considerable interest with such themes as these painted in appealing confectionary colors in open decorative space. Although improvised, her careful approach to handling her preferred combination of enamel and oil paint (especially her characteristic long skeins of dribbled enamel) is nuanced and at times almost exquisite.

Bocchino keeps larger shapes flat, and clearly is having as much wry fun as possible. Certainly her work evokes summertime jazz. And her ongoing interest in all those meandering, whisper-

thin lines of paint suggests that her art is connected to traditions that had their expression in a longing for craftsmanship. However, her knack for simple, potent, often humorous effects is more substantially displayed in this lively show from Exhibit A Gallery, New York.

Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts, 200 S. Madison St. at the riverfront, Wilmington. Kocot and Hatton to Oct. 12; Bocchino to July 13. 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays; noon-8 p.m. Wednesdays; 1-5 Sundays. 302-656-6466.



"Wake," an installation in two rooms of the Delaware Center for Contemporary Arts, by Tom Hatton and Marcia Kocot, a husband-and-wife team from Philadelphia.