

Typically, a painting doesn't move, but it can stand at the threshold of movement. Without itself being in motion, it alerts us to being in motion. What doesn't move, moves. Pretty remarkable how that works.

To make her paintings of dancers, German artist Silke Otto-Knapp doesn't refer to performances, but to photographs. Her favorite moments come from famous modern ballets such as *Les Noces* (1923) by Bronislava Nijinska, *Checkmate* (1937) by Ninette de Valois, or from postmodern works such as *Trio A* (1965) by Yvonne Rainer. Her task is not to tell the story of a dance, but to use it to make a painting: she doesn't attempt to represent the lively and dynamic flow of physical bodies moving through space and time, but she turns dance into flat forms on flat surfaces, made only of light and line. She asks a dancer to behave like a painting, her body wedged between the four edges of a canvas. If that sounds uncomfortable or inhospitable, it isn't.

Layer after layer, Otto-Knapp paints, washes away, and paints again, building a space of metallic grays, reflective silvers, and muted off-whites with watercolor and gouache. There is no foreground and no background, and if shapes come into focus to become bodies or silhouettes, they also recede as patterns or geometries. Each painting balances what it wants to reveal with what it wants to hide—it all depends on how light hits it and makes it move. Like dance, her paintings happen in the here-and-now.

Have a look at Otto-Knapp's *Two Figures (white)* (2006) and *Turning Shadow (silver)* (2009). See?

Her work involves touch, transitions, and trial-and-error, with no central plot. Her paintings are constellations of specific moments, gestures, and references that work together like dance moves, not chess moves. With elegance and gravity, they perform what they are about.

Two Figures (white) and *Turning Shadow (silver)* are here with us from February 25th through March 20th, 2011.