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STÉPHANE DAFFLON, *Airless*, 2000.
Installation view.

PARIS

STÉPHANE DAFFLON

AIR DE PARIS

This is a first one-man show by Swiss artist Stéphane Dafflon. Remodeling a room to look like a white submarine galley, painted a glossy synthetic enamel, and fitted with a portal entry; inside he hung, at various heights, several small, very graphic, abstract paintings in a hard-edge style, whose soft linear geometry (composed of sober flat colors and soft geometric lines) recalled 50s design as it has been reprocessed by contemporary graphic designers like Mike Mills. But Dafflon takes design a step further by combining geometric painting with set-piece installation. He wanted to create a "synthetic" space different from the standard, contained, straight-on, eye-level art space. Here he pushed the idea of the white cube into that of a floating sublunary chamber whose interiority lifts us off our feet just enough to sense how an atmospheric "surround" can visually defy gravity.

Transport was an implied metaphor in this show, while geometric design was the primary ingredient in what seemed to me a kind of seductive, atmospheric, airport art. Brian Eno glommed onto such an idea twenty years ago in his music for airports. Eero Saarinen built New York's Kennedy airport to look like a kind of friendly flying saucer. Dafflon's works would fit that kind of space, maybe paintings hung low along a rampway, or up on a bulkhead, or even seen upside-down. They are wickedly simple and would probably look great in some future starship. Who knows where he'll go next, but this little show had a nice buzz.

Jeff Rian