

ARTnews

Ben Aronson

Jenkins Johnson
San Francisco

Boston-based painter Ben Aronson chronicles the urban landscape, striking a thoughtful balance between description and abstraction. He completes light

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and color studies in situ for each piece, then returns to the studio to craft larger oil-on-panel versions. To create works for "Explorations," this show of works from 2007, the artist traveled to San Francisco, Santa Monica, New York, Nice, and Paris.

Attentive to the nuances of color and



Ben Aronson, *The Bay Bridge from Pacific*, 2007,
oil on panel, 60" x 60".
Jenkins Johnson.

light that characterize a locale, Aronson found his perfect subject in San Francisco. In *The Bay Bridge from Pacific*, he transforms a busy cityscape into a quartet of interlocking irregular triangles that converge at a central point at the base of a faraway bridge support. The dark asphalt street falls away as cobalt sky and water rise in the distance. In *Late Day on Washington Street*, Aronson toys with time and paints day and night in the same picture. Building tops are flooded with warm light, while the streets below are enveloped in scumbled shadow, the tail-lights of cars illuminated. *Overpass, Santa Monica*, an homage to Richard Diebenkorn's geometry, compresses its view toward the ocean between bands of yellow, black, and blue.

Aronson's working methods are clearly revealed in his works on paper. In the two ink-and-wash figure drawings, he divides the rectangle into thirds or quarters, and places the seated female figure in raking light to create a complex of diagonals and overlapping forms. The resulting drawings are warmly personal, tightly cropped compositions in black, white, and gray, worthy cousins to Diebenkorn's splendid figure drawings.

—Lea Feinstein