

# Art in America

The cover features a multi-layered painting. In the foreground, a woman with dark, wavy hair and a man with dark hair, both with soft, realistic features, are depicted. The woman is wearing a brown jacket over a red top, and the man is in a blue suit with a white shirt and tie. In the background, a man and a woman in traditional Japanese clothing are shown in a more expressive, less detailed style. They are positioned under a large tree with pink and white cherry blossoms. The sky is a clear, bright blue, and the overall style is a blend of realism and expressive brushwork.

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# Doug Ohlson's Fields of Meaning

*Covering 20 years of this prolific abstractionist's output, a recent New York exhibition examined the visual and metaphorical subtleties of his large-scale paintings.*

**BY CARTER RATCLIFF**

**S**ince the mid-1960s, Doug Ohlson has been making large paintings from blocks and bands of color. Having established these premises, he has stuck with them, giving his oeuvre a sweeping consistency. Whatever faith a long career as an abstract painter requires, Ohlson has kept it, unwaveringly but never predictably. Every season he offers surprises, usually subtle but sometimes not. In 1982, he made a basic change in the way his images work. Until that year, his pigments had been opaque. Then, as the art historian Richard Stapleford notes, "he began to use translucent colors loosely painted in large, adjacent panels. Pictorial space in his earlier work was created by the vibration between two . . . colors. With these new translucent colors, surface and depth are redefined as within the picture space, not in front of it."<sup>1</sup>

