



John Brown's 10 Attempts to Imagine the Inside of My Body, #9.

A meditative journey

GALLERY GOING

GARY MICHAEL DAULT

Toronto painter **John Brown** has always been something of an artist's artist. His richly worked abstractions are raw yet delicate, opulent yet controlled. They are, at the same time, thoughtful enough to engage the admiration of Brown's peers, most of whom wouldn't be caught dead toiling in the fields of abstraction. Clearly, John (Jack) Brown paints a very special kind of painting.

The titles of his newest works, now at the **Olga Korper Gallery**, go some distance toward defining Brown's particular take on abstraction: all of the paintings are numbered embodiments of the overall title, *10 Attempts to Imagine the Inside of My Body*. This does not

mean that Brown paints abstracted organs, bones or rivulets of vein and artery. Rather, these intense, highly romantic paintings, gnarled and scraped almost to the point of chromatic oblivion, appear not to be about Brown gazing upon his subject but, rather, to be the artist's meditative excursions into it. Brown's visceral brick-reds may echo the look of crusted blood, but his clear, innocent Tiepolo-blues and his Van Gogh wheatfield-yellows are indexed to landscapes from the wide world. What it comes to, one expects, is that these internal/external paintings are simply the purest visual imaginings, prompted by the artist's total experience of his life. Take the beautiful *10 Attempts #9* (1997-99). You might be excused if you saw the mélange of paint on the left as a tumbling, flame-coloured thicket pausing on a green meadow. Brown himself appears to see the thicket,

so dealer **Olga Korper** reports, as looking like a spiky-nosed head by Giacometti. You see, then, how absorptive, how encyclopedic Brown's paintings can be. *Until March 24. \$1,800-\$6,800. 17 Morrow Ave., Toronto. 416-538-8220.*

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