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S.F. gets better end of Hosfelt show with N.Y.

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Bernard Lokai, *Landschaftsblock S (Landscape Block S)*, 2010, oil on canvas, 130 x 345 cm

Several San Francisco galleries have ventured bicoastal operations, but I cannot recall any presenting concurrent linked exhibitions here and in New York, the way Hosfelt does with "Einfluss: 8 From Düsseldorf."

For once, San Francisco gets the better end of the split. Even disregarding the cachet both shows garner from all the represented artists having some link with Düsseldorf's vaunted Kunstakademie, the San Francisco selection makes a more powerful impression than the New York lot.

Bernard Lokai's "Landscape Block S" (2010) forms an array of 18 small canvases, each apparently inspired by, or chancing to suggest, a view of land, sea or sky. The fluency and range of techniques involved recalls the style-shifting of Gerhard Richter, one of the Kunstakademie's most famous graduates and teachers.

But Lokai's work exudes ambivalence about his own dexterity that does not seem to trouble Richter, or that he discharges with irony.

Stefan Kürten, Driss Oadahi, Birgit Jensen, Stefan Ettliger and Jutta Haeckel distance themselves from the content and touch in their pictures by resorting to various processes or preset structures of visual information. All of their strategies recall to some extent another famous predecessor from the Kunstakademie, Sigmar Polke(1941-2010).

Yet, unlike Polke, all of these painters seem to want to involve viewers sensuously as well as intellectually in their works' details. Haeckel's "Network" (2010) appears to overlay on a mottled ground an image of a decorated tree with the veins of a city map, producing a composite that resists every effort to penetrate it.

Cornelius Völker has found a humorous and timely image with which to mobilize his medium and technique. His "Sink 1" (2008) uses cyclonic brushwork to describe something fluid - could that deep ruby be blood? - spiraling into a sink drain.