

ARTS

84 THE BOSTON GLOBE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1989

PERSPECTIVES

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The bigger the better seems to be the rule with the work of Boston artist Nan Tull, who is showing new paintings and drawings at the Akin Gallery, 476 Columbus Ave., through October 28. Tull works with organic imagery that has become less specific recently: Gone are the identifiable amaryllises. In their place are abstracted bud or bulb forms, or, in the case of a marvelous suite of drawings, movement auras without the movement makers.

In a portfolio at the gallery is a photo of an installation Tull did at P.S. 1, a New York alternative space, last year. The photo shows a wall-sized drawing of a flaring tube that might be a cross between a calla lily and a tornado; it stretches across the wall with a single, expansive gesture. The best works in the Akin show — the movement drawings — share the sense of stretch of this mammoth piece. Each of the drawings at Akin features a large, dark, throbbing shape: The handling is quite similar to that in Donald Sultan's thunderous lemon drawings. And, like Sultan's lemons, Tull's drawings

leave fuzzy halos that imply a shimmering motion. The titles, too, suggest movement: "Point," "Sway," "Strum" and "Pulse." This last features a bar — like a windshield wiper or metronome — that leaves faded horizontal swooshes in its wake, evidence of movement past.

In her "American Garden" series of big paintings, Tull contains robust, rounded forms with vertical bars that prevent them from flying out at us. In smaller and less successful paintings that read as experiments, she combines loose, painterly grids with spiral, arc and oval forms, but doesn't achieve the sweep of the big pieces.

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