

P E R S P E C T I V E S

Tull's work is ripe, round, bursting with life

By Christine Temin
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The phrase "bursting with life" literally describes the ripe, bulging forms in Nan Tull's paintings and drawings, at the Akin Gallery, 476 Columbus Ave., through November 25. Tull — who used to be known as Nan Wezniak but has recently shed her married name, although not, she made clear in an announcement, her husband — bases her work on blown-up forms from nature, usually one per canvas. Sometimes the forms are easy to identify.

They are seed pods, shells, or flowers. Sometimes they are more obscure, looking as much like bulbs as fruits.

The most impressive of these works — big, multi-part pieces like "Bloom of an Aging Thistle" and "Imperiled Progenitors" — combine two dramatically different ways of handling paint. "Bloom" is a triptych. In the center canvas is a mass of slow-moving, grainy, rough paint in snowy blues and whites, forming the spiky, protective points of the plant. The very heart of the work is in darker colors, lush reds and blues. Flanking

this painting are two others, tall and narrow, painted in quick, shiny, frictionless black and white. One long-stemmed plant in each bends gracefully toward the center form. In addition to making you think of plants as metaphors for certain human relationships, the strongly contrasting elements make you acutely aware of both color and black and white. Similar contrasts show up in the four-part "Imperiled Progenitors." The same long, liquid curving shapes that could be chiffon in the black and white panels look like prickly pastel burrs in the gritty, colored

panels.

Some of the simpler, one-part pieces glow with the melting colors of a ripe peach. The rounded forms occupy almost all of the canvas. What background there is is anonymous space, inflected in the same grainy paint as the paintings' primary shapes. There are several black and white, charcoal, pastel and oil stick drawings from Tull's "Scattered Seed" series. The overscaled pods split open, spitting out a vaporous, nearly weightless explosion of airborne specks of potential life.

