

# Artweek

## Previews

### Tracey Adams

**A** multitude of signs and symbols, some more familiar, others a bit more cryptic, come together in Tracey Adams's canvases.

Many of the more recognizable images and shapes carry archetypal associations: trees representing nature, shelter, shade; egg-shaped forms connoting fertility, fragility and birth; boats alluding to travel, passage and transcendence. The paintings also contain images of prehistoric architectural structures. These are primitive dwellings, modeled after the forms found in nature perhaps: womb-like caves or bulbous heaps of rocks swirled together to resemble beehives. Could these temples be devoted to the worship of fertility goddesses? They are certainly evocative of the female form.

The other, more elusive elements of Adams's compositions include hieroglyph-like markings. It is as if the artist has deciphered a prehistoric language that we have forgotten to speak. But if we look closer, simplify our mode of reading, maybe we can decode its meanings. Why do these symbols look familiar? Is it possible that we genetically retain an understanding of our prehistoric past? Does the collective consciousness of our ancestors lie coded in our genes? Perhaps Adams's ability to convey complex modes of expression with rudimentary forms of communication in her paintings is evidence that it does. It is no surprise, therefore, that the viewer, for her part, is able to respond to these images on such an instinctual level.

*Tracey Adams: Intimate Possibilities* is on view through December 7 at Bryant Street Gallery, 520 Bryant St., Palo Alto.

Tracey Adams, *Gallarus*, 2001, mixed media on panel, 48" x 36"

