

# LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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## Robert Berlind

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At the Galleries  
By Karen Wilkin

Three fine shows of landscape painting reminded us that perceptual figuration still thrives. "Robert Berlind: Kyoto/Cochecton" at Lennon, Weinberg, Inc. was both a celebration and a memorial to the painter, who sadly died weeks before the opening. The exhibition brought together works derived from studies made directly from the motif, during an extended stay in Kyoto and near Berlind's studio in rural New York State. The young shoots of rice paddies, seen through chain-link fences, and complex swooping temple roofs coexisted with views of the New York studio's doorway and its roof, seen through budding branches. As was long characteristic of Berlind's best work, these deceptively straightforward, plainspoken paintings played havoc with our perceptions. Nothing was quite what it seemed. We were confronted with unexpected conflations of near and far, deprived of a place to stand, and forced to consider images we thought we had come to terms with in new ways. The harmonious mood created by cool, often subdued, carefully adjusted color was gently disturbed by hard-to-grasp spatial subtleties. The rice paddy paintings compressed the implied grid of regularly spaced, minimally indicated acid green shoots against the more assertively drawn warped squares of wire fencing, the former in parallel rows, the latter set at forty-five degrees. The quiet argument between the two orientations animated compositions that seemed, at first acquaintance, to be classically still. In some of the variations on the motif, reflections—or were they shadows?—on the sheet of water, made congruent with the surface of the canvas, further destabilized the image. We kept reading the elegantly inflected expanse as a kind of all-over abstraction and then once again enjoying the rational explanation for the image.

Berlind once told me he wanted to paint things at the moment they were seen but not yet recognized. His last paintings seemed to do just that. A severely geometric image, divided into vertical bands, read as woods, siding, and something familiar but indefinable that seemed to mediate between the two. With help from smaller studies, the mystery resolved itself as a drawing of those woods on the open door of the studio. This uneasy combination of observations provoked one of the strongest works in a consistently strong show. Berlind was not only a fine painter, but also a perceptive writer about art, and an admired teacher. He will be greatly missed.