

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Richard Kalina

McCarthy, Gerard. "Richard Kalina at Lennon, Weinberg." *Art in America*, May 2007.

Richard Kalina at Lennon, Weinberg

This recent exhibition by New York-based artist and critic Richard Kalina, his sixth solo at this venue, included 10 works on paper and seven mid-size paintings, the largest being 48 by 56 inches. Both groups of works bear similarities in terms of luminosity and texture, and all of them feature colorful patterns of spare geometric shapes systematically arranged to form irregular grids. The delicacy of the watercolors, however, contrasts with the bold tactility of the paintings, particularly in the patches of raw linen that are visible on each surface. Surrounding a centralized geometric configuration, the raw fabric is occasionally interposed as dun-colored modules that are essential to the grid. In addition, the paintings' colorful surfaces are embellished with small pieces of painted tissue paper arranged in squares or rectangular patterns.

At the center of *Magnetic South* is a rectangle made of 25 colorful, slightly irregular painted squares, each unit framed by a line in a contrasting hue. The image's resemblance to a quilt results from the way the squares nestle snugly against one another and from the patches of raw linen that are exposed at regular intervals. These are

connected by thickly painted white lines stretching to the edges of the composition, which serve to contain the colorful units.

Carthage features a rhythmic motif in which patterns of painted lines and exposed raw linen conjoin in a sequence of abutting rectangles and squares. The longest rectangles are equivalent in length to four aligned squares. A similar pattern appears in *Pondicherry*, but here it extends across a purple plane against which five vertical and three horizontal colored bands appear woven into an open net. Each band consists of two equal lengths of contrasting colors. This light and dark pattern together with the serried patches of tissue paper evokes an ancient mosaic. And the slight ripple of the bands' contours conveys a floating effect suggesting a compressed pictorial space that lies just behind the white-painted grid.

In a Garden in Trastevere shows two interwoven multi-colored bands meandering on a deep crimson ground. The superimposed grid imparts a maplike character to the image, as if inviting an imaginary stroll along luxuriant pathways. Here, and in other works such as *Jupiter Plains*, with its vibrant blue rectangles, Kalina accomplishes within limited parameters a surprisingly broad range of pictorial effects. The surface inflections and the sinuous contours of the colored shapes lend an almost visceral substantiality to these lively compositions.

—Gerard McCarthy



Richard Kalina: *Jupiter Plains*, 2006, acrylic, Flashe and collage on linen, 52 by 44 inches; at Lennon, Weinberg.

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Richard Kalina

Wilkin, Karen. "At the Galleries." *The Hudson Review*, Spring 2007.

KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

Richard Kalina's recent paintings and watercolors at Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., while more intimate—nothing much over four feet in any direction—were, in some ways, as disconcerting as the von Kleist series. The first impact of Kalina's pictures came from their lush, intense color. (They're made with flashe, a super-saturated pigment remarkable for its brilliance.) Glowing raspberry, luminous ultramarine, intense malachite green, delectable plum, and acid yellow, presented in geometric, repetitive units, set up complex rhythms that at once recalled Indian, Middle Eastern, and North African decorative arts traditions, medieval manuscripts, the borders of stained glass windows, and much more, including the paintings of Paul Klee, without particularly resembling any of them. Kalina uses these gorgeous hues to animate, syncopate, and even subvert the frontal, symmetrical, apparently systematic arrangements to which he attaches them. He keeps us guessing, and, in the end, thwarts our expectations of cracking his codes. He seduces us with his lush, vibrant palette, convincing us by the apparent lucidity of his compositions that we will eventually understand internal relationships that govern the image, and then, just when we think we've figured out the sequence in one picture, baffling us in another. This tension between the preconceived and the intuitive, the deduced and the invented, is paralleled and reinforced by Kalina's method, which pits the hand against the near-mechanical. What appear to be carefully plotted and gridded paintings are, in fact, "mosaics" of painted paper, collaged together, sometimes in orderly progressions whose logic can be parsed, sometimes in more casual arrangements whose rules, if any, defy even careful observation.

At Lennon, Weinberg a selection of full sheet watercolors proposed a wealth of alternative statements of Kalina's themes. Some declared themselves relatively quickly, but unlike the majority of the paintings, which demanded that we seek the determinants of their color relationships, many of the watercolors reminded us of the power of the irrational. Again, there seemed to be connections with textiles, tile patterns, even flags and emblems, but these were fleeting associations. The best of Kalina's idiosyncratic pictures seemed at once enigmatic, high-minded demonstrations of persistence and intelligence, and arresting objects that delighted the eye—not a bad combination.