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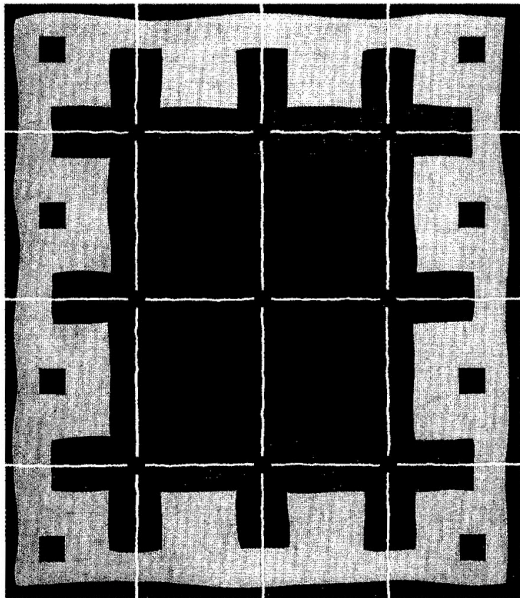
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Richard Kalina

Amy, Michael. "Richard Kalina at Lennon, Weinberg." *Art in America*, April 2004.

Art in America

April 2004



Richard Kalina: *Esperanto*, 2003, collage, acrylic, flashe on linen, 36 by 31 inches; at Lennon, Weinberg.

Richard Kalina at Lennon, Weinberg

Surprisingly, Richard Kalina's new medium-sized abstract grid paintings are built up of a great many small, rectangular pieces of rice paper. The process of creating these works involved painting sheets of rice paper in a solid color with thin acrylic paint, then tearing up the sheets and gluing down the resulting pieces onto a raw linen support, parts of which had been painted

white. The dull, light brown linen canvas is always exposed along the margins of the support, framing and containing the brightly colored symmetrical configuration at its center. The thinly painted, diaphanous rectangles, which achieve greater density of color where they overlap, function as simulacra of brushmarks or as tesserae in a mosaic. Kalina's bright, translucent palette brings watercolor and even stained glass to mind. The white underlayer accentuates the luminosity. Some of the compositions also recall the quilts of Gee's Bend, about which the artist has written [see *A.I.A.*, Oct. '03].

In *Esperanto* (2003), the red, attenuated arms of a Greek cross at the center of the composition are partly overlapped by framing bars of dark and light green, which are themselves surrounded by a field of yellow. The large rectangular areas between the arms of the cross are filled with small squares of dark and light blue. Still smaller squares of raw canvas are left exposed at the center of the spots where the rectangular bars forming the cross and the framing green bars meet. Thin, white horizontal and vertical lines of flashe interconnect these light brown squares and run on to the periphery of the canvas, thereby bisecting the cross and bars.

These paintings derive their visual punch in part from the boldness of their luminous color schemes and their optical push-

pull effects. Also important is how the symmetry of their designs is not always respected in the choice of hue or tone, and how the torn edges of the rice paper create wavy, life-filled lines. Meticulously planned, yet playful, these intricately layered structures allow for layered readings. Thus *Esperanto*, the title of which evokes the wannabe universal language, can be read as a ground plan for some utopian work of urbanism. This is a prime example of the optically dazzling, thought-provoking, abstract geometry that is Kalina's specialty.

—Michaël Amy