

Stephen Westfall *New Paintings*

Thursday, April 26, 2001 - Saturday, June 2, 2001

Stephen Westfall (b. 1953) has extended the range of possibilities offered by the grids which have defined his paintings since the mid-1990's. He paints arrangements of vertical and horizontal lines which shift at the points of contact, and constructs subtly unstable networks against differently-colored fields. Using the grid in a single layer, Westfall relied upon the variables of width, proportion and color to establish a sense of scale, space and temperament. By laying one grid over another and establishing interactions between them as well as with the field color, Westfall introduced new spatial relationships to the paintings. Once he began to stretch the grids or trim them into segments, many new opportunities to explore dynamic pictorial space and our accompanying associations became available. Small incidents of paint handling on the light-absorbent matte surfaces give the works intimacy and detail.

There will be nine paintings in the current exhibition. Three of them, *Summer*, *River Road* and *Lantern*, have layered, off-kilter grids in combinations of bright and dark, warm and cool. Two paintings in a large vertical format, *Dogwood* and *Pranaparamita*, rely upon the same system, but the width of the bands which constitute the foreground layer gives the foreground weight similar to that of the background; these broad grids divide the composition into sections and perhaps become backgrounds themselves. *Germantown*, *Underworld*, and *Bye Bye Blackbird* have top, middle and bottom sections in addition to layered sections which abut, overlap or intersect each other to suggest images more common to figurative painting than to abstraction. And one new painting, *Grand Opening*, takes off in its own new direction without a rectilinear grid in sight.

Westfall's last exhibition at Lennon, Weinberg Gallery took place in 1999, followed by gallery shows in Germany and Switzerland. Since then, survey exhibition of his work was presented at Western Carolina University and a group of new paintings was exhibited at Colgate University, where Westfall was visiting chair in art and art history in the fall of 2000. He teaches at the School of Visual Arts and at the graduate program at Bard College.