

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Stephen Westfall

Jesus and Bossa Nova

November 7 – December 28, 2013
Opening reception Thursday, November 7, 6 – 8 pm

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10am – 6pm



Jesus and Bossa Nova, 2013

Stephen Westfall's paintings have always revolved around relationships among colors and between color and composition. Emerging from a post-pop, post-minimalist environment, and extending a history of hard-edge painting that springs from the roots of modernism, Westfall gained recognition as a skilled practitioner of grid-based geometric abstraction. His brand has been an outward facing abstraction, impure and imperfect, reveling in instability, humor and observational associations.

Those associations have included game boards, roadway signage, Navajo and Plains Indian motifs and Byzantine decorative patterns. The paintings of John McLaughlin, Frank Stella, Sol Lewitt, Agnes Martin, Nicholas Krushenick and Jo Baer all have a place in the ancestry of Westfall's work, as of course does Mondrian. Less obvious perhaps is his affinity for Matisse:

Always in the back of my mind are Matisse and Mondrian, perhaps Matisse even more so which is why I don't paint like him. But he's somebody I think about a lot, in the way that I guess Ellsworth Kelly thinks about Matisse and doesn't paint like him either. It's there in the work if you can imagine Matisse doing hard edge painting - something that he wouldn't have done - but the thing about historical distance is that you can do a mash-up like that.



Sandalwood, 2013

There is an inspired approach to color in Westfall's newest work. As long ago as 2001, he had begun to make paintings that featured a specific set of colors – ochre, orange, red, blue, green, purple and black with white space between allowing those colors to advance and recede against the picture plane. Most works of the next decade continued to posit some sort of figure-ground relationship but by 2010, Westfall was placing the colors directly next to each other, most often in diagonal bands, in ways that eliminated the space of the ground.



Time Tells Us What to Do, 2013



Djinn, 2013



Scheherazade, 2013

He has now expanded the color range to include grey or taupe, pink, lighter and darker greens and blues, a brighter yellow and a browner red. He says that among the paintings in the current exhibition, “both Rosewood and Sandalwood invoke a palette more aligned with the earthy palette of early Cubism while most of the others distribute higher keyed color through design in a manner akin to Delaunay’s Orphism.” Each color is mixed, often with its own complement, paradoxically making it more vividly itself. Values range from brilliant to muted and from light to dark, causing the paintings to pulse and flicker.

Westfall begins with the premise of random distribution of colors. As he fine-tunes the placement of colors in his visually complex yet deceptively simple structures and he builds up the paintings layer by hand-painted layer, contrasts and associations among the colors begin to cohere into a unified atmosphere. By the time he is finished, each painting has its own glow and a distinctive color temperament. To the extent that color has light and light is color, Westfall has made these paintings from the color of light itself.

Stephen Westfall (b. 1953) received his MFA in 1978 from the University of California, Santa Barbara. Westfall has been represented in New York by Lennon, Weinberg since 1997 and has had exhibitions at their locations in Soho and Chelsea; this is his seventh exhibition with the gallery. He exhibited new gouaches at kunstgaleriebonn in Germany in 2013 and will execute a large-scale wall painting at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. Works by the artist are in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Kemper Museum in Kansas City, the Louisiana Museum in Humlebaek, Denmark, the Munson Williams Proctor Museum in Utica, New York, the Baltimore Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Westfall has received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Nancy Graves Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation. He received a Rome Prize Fellowship and spent a year at the American Academy in Rome during 2009 and 2010. He is a professor at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and in the graduate program at Bard University. He is a Contributing Editor at *Art in America*.

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