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Richard Kalina

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RICHARD KALINA LENNON, WEINBERG

Richard Kalina's recent paintings are systematic yet intuitive, summoning—despite their rigorous abstraction—the optical play of color and light in Seurat's work. This handsome exhibition, Kalina's ninth at the gallery since 1993, included six watercolors and eight medium-size works on linen, which employ a collage technique that the artist has been fine-tuning over the last decade. Many of the titles refer to scientific concepts in disciplines ranging from physics to cybernetics, yet the results feel like poetic interpretations rather than literal illustrations. Though the precision of the works lends them an immaculate appearance, closer looking reveals a handmade touch.

Each of the collages on linen is a variation on a theme. For example, *Azimuth* (2011, 70 by 40 inches) consists of a glowing field of overlapping orange, vermilion and crimson parallelograms composed of cut or torn pieces of painted rice paper. This is surrounded by a jagged border of raw linen and overlaid with an arrangement of mostly pastel ellipses that vary in size and orientation. The yellow, green, orange, blue or thistle-colored ellipses—also patchworks of torn rice paper—float behind a spacious grid of narrow white lines. A small square of brown linen is exposed at each intersection of the grid. Wrinkles in the rice paper add texture. The contrasting chromatic notes and the small linen squares create a visual musicality that conjures up Bach's contrapuntal inventions.

To make these works, Kalina primes sized linen with a white ground, taping off the areas where he will leave the linen showing. He adds the bits of jewel-toned rice paper to the primed area until the desired luminosity of color is achieved. Finally, he applies the white lines, which connect the regular squares of nubby linen to each other and the edges.



Richard Kalina:
Parallax, 2011,
collage, acrylic and
Flashe on linen, 48
inches in diameter; at
Lennon, Weinberg.

In *Parallax* (2011, 48 inches in diameter), one of two tondos shown, the linen squares have been left out. Here, free-floating circles passing in front of the grid are arrayed into three concentric rings on top of a subtly varied purple ground. The staggered positions and colors of the circles produce a pulsating effect. In *Ordinal* (2011, 40 by 60 inches), the background field changes color, running the spectrum from red to violet across 11 columns. It is like looking through animated sheets of colored Plexiglas.

By comparison, most of the watercolors are minimal and chartlike, with lots of white space. They also incorporate grids, but small colored squares (or circles in one case) replace the brown linen at the intersections. In the watercolor-and-graphite *Trace Elements* (2011, 30 by 22½ inches), each box of a grid with 11 columns and 12 rows contains an oval in which the color fades at one end. I stepped outside the gallery to witness a moment of life imitating art. The unresolved edge of the waxing moon seemed to echo the watercolor shapes.

—Elisa Decker