

# ALEXANDRE

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, MARCH 12, 1999

## ART IN REVIEW

### Stephen Westfall

Lennon, Weinberg  
560 Broadway, at Prince Street  
SoHo  
Through March 27

Stephen Westfall's abstract paintings appear to be based on grids set against a monochrome field. Yet structural solidity is seldom in evidence. Instead, the artist shuffles and tweaks his components to produce a jumpy, just-suppressed energy.

When one grid lies behind another, certain lines overlap and stick together. Verticals and horizontals are seldom straight or smooth. Often they are made up of small lines inexactly joined so that the grids turn into networks of misaligned squares and rectangles with nodelike corners. Precariously stacked, these boxy forms appear to be gently quaking, as if they might collapse.

Sometimes an impression of instability is made through color: the combination of gray-blue lines on a poppy-orange ground in "Namaste" produces a classic, Op-ish retinal jangle. In other cases, a single color becomes the focus of attention, first because it is pleasing, but also because it has odd, just-at-the-tip-of-the-tongue associations.

Such is the case with a purple that is penitential and grapey, or a blue that might refer to nature but also has the light-absorbent chalkiness of dining room Wedgewood.

In the end, Mr. Westfall's work feels far closer to figurative painting than to "pure" abstraction (whatever that might be). The modernist formal ingredients he calls upon are time-honored. But what he distills from them — a blend of anxiety, self-effacing humor and buttoned-up transport — is personable and distinctive.

HOLLAND COTTER

291 Grand Street, New York, New York 10002

25 East 73rd Street, 2nd Floor, New York, New York 10021 212.755.2828 alexandregallery.com

ALEXANDRE GALLERY ALEXANDRE FINE ART INC. ESTABLISHED 1996