

## PETER YOUNG

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Peter Young deals often in infinities, symmetries, and repeating and non-repeating patterns; strategies that are patently abstract, but at the same time manage to harness an intensely human connection to the spiritual. His series of precise yet self-consciously hand fabricated paintings from the early '80s, exhibited at Albus Greenspon, are shimmering windows into oblivion.

Perhaps the connection lies in the fact that these forms are associated, especially in Young's case, with traditional modes of weaving and basket making that the artist saw while in Oaxaca, Mexico. There is also a decidedly '80s appeal to these paintings that differentiates them from Young's blot, dot, or hard-edged works—the arrival of the digital aesthetic seems to be lurking somewhere in the painting process. Subtract the creepy feel of the miasma of static that transfixed Drew Barrymore in *Poltergeist*, and you get the feeling of technology gone awry; some kind of peyote-addled Atari wonderland or endless iterations of Lego.

The lyrical abstraction group of painters that Young associated with in the late '60s and '70s: Ron Davis, Dan Christensen, Ronnie Landfield, and Ken Showell, among others, focused on exuberant use of color and novel techniques of expression—staining, spraying, pointillism, and squeegeeing. Some, like Landfield and Christensen, followed more painterly trajectories, while Ron Davis has embraced digitally-made imagery. Young fluctuates in the methodology he uses to get his point across. The series of white, De Kooning/Gorky-esque canvases he presented last year in the same space couldn't be farther from these mathematical exercises in color counterpoint.

But on closer inspection, the precision falls away. The initial work in the exhibition, “#5-1977” (1977), is a simple square refrain, referencing Mexican weaving. It embraces a minimalist repetition, but the colors vary in weight and opacity, the edges of each mosaic square of paint are uneven and breathe with a freedom at which the overall format of the piece does not hint. It's a relief. The following series of nine paintings, all large and rectangular, are riffs on this woven theme. But through oscillations in color and pattern they develop much more vibrant personalities—sort of a *Well Tempered Clavier* based on a Tibetan Tanka format.

The paintings with their thousands of carefully painted patches must have been mind-numbing to create, and from canvas to canvas one can see Young refining certain techniques and generating a vocabulary of patterns that guides the eye and affects the heart. Symmetry is respected, but is not a hard and fast rule. Imaginary forms appear: “26-1983” (1983) seems to present a series of deities in formation, like the Hindu Pantheon, while “23-1982” (1982) is perhaps referencing the brickwork of Chichen Itza or Tikal.

These works are more direct and insistent than a tapestry or basket pattern. It is probably a combination of the severity of the rectangular format, the smooth coldness of the paint versus the warmth of wool or straw, and the gallery setting. But the DNA-like repetition/variation of the colors is not random or accidental. These seductive passages of color are overwhelming and indecipherable, while remaining modest enough in their scale and fabrication to be entirely human at the same time.