

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

514 West 25th Street, New York, NY 10001 Tel. 212 941 0012 Fax. 212 929 3265
info@lennonweinberg.com www.lennonweinberg.com

Richard Kalina

Wilkin, Karen. "At the Galleries." *The Hudson Review*, Spring 2007.

KAREN WILKIN

At the Galleries

Richard Kalina's recent paintings and watercolors at Lennon, Weinberg, Inc., while more intimate—nothing much over four feet in any direction—were, in some ways, as disconcerting as the von Kleist series. The first impact of Kalina's pictures came from their lush, intense color. (They're made with flashe, a super-saturated pigment remarkable for its brilliance.) Glowing raspberry, luminous ultramarine, intense malachite green, delectable plum, and acid yellow, presented in geometric, repetitive units, set up complex rhythms that at once recalled Indian, Middle Eastern, and North African decorative arts traditions, medieval manuscripts, the borders of stained glass windows, and much more, including the paintings of Paul Klee, without particularly resembling any of them. Kalina uses these gorgeous hues to animate, syncopate, and even subvert the frontal, symmetrical, apparently systematic arrangements to which he attaches them. He keeps us guessing, and, in the end, thwarts our expectations of cracking his codes. He seduces us with his lush, vibrant palette, convincing us by the apparent lucidity of his compositions that we will eventually understand internal relationships that govern the image, and then, just when we think we've figured out the sequence in one picture, baffling us in another. This tension between the preconceived and the intuitive, the deduced and the invented, is paralleled and reinforced by Kalina's method, which pits the hand against the near-mechanical. What appear to be carefully plotted and gridded paintings are, in fact, "mosaics" of painted paper, collaged together, sometimes in orderly progressions whose logic can be parsed, sometimes in more casual arrangements whose rules, if any, defy even careful observation.

At Lennon, Weinberg a selection of full sheet watercolors proposed a wealth of alternative statements of Kalina's themes. Some declared themselves relatively quickly, but unlike the majority of the paintings, which demanded that we seek the determinants of their color relationships, many of the watercolors reminded us of the power of the irrational. Again, there seemed to be connections with textiles, tile patterns, even flags and emblems, but these were fleeting associations. The best of Kalina's idiosyncratic pictures seemed at once enigmatic, high-minded demonstrations of persistence and intelligence, and arresting objects that delighted the eye—not a bad combination.