

LENNON, WEINBERG, INC.

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Stephen Westfall

Crispy Fugue State

May 12 – July 29, 2016

Opening reception Thursday, May 12, 6 - 8pm

Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10am - 6pm through June 30

Tuesday-Friday 10am - 6pm July 5 - 29



Oracle and Canterbury, 2014
Wall paintings. Art OMI, NY



Aeolian, 2014, 72 x 66",
oil and alkyd on canvas



Three Kings, 2015, 66 x 78",
oil and alkyd on canvas

Over the course of the last decade, I wanted my work to address architecture more directly and wall paintings seemed a way to fuse paintings to architectural scale. I regard the wall paintings now as being as essential to my artistic practice as my paintings on canvas and paper, which are bound by more conventional notions of portability and transferability.

Stephen Westfall

Stephen Westfall has been generating ideas for wall paintings since 2007, when he was invited to work at Solvent Space, a site for experimentation in Richmond, Virginia. On that occasion, and for the installations that followed during the next six years in galleries and elsewhere, the compositions of his wall-based works tended to be derived from already existing oil paintings. Even when they weren't, as in the wall paintings created at the American Academy in Rome in 2010, an overall structure was typically contained within the perimeters of the format in a way that had long been characteristic of his oil paintings even as his focus shifted from rectilinear grids to an emphasis on bold and multi-colored diagonals.

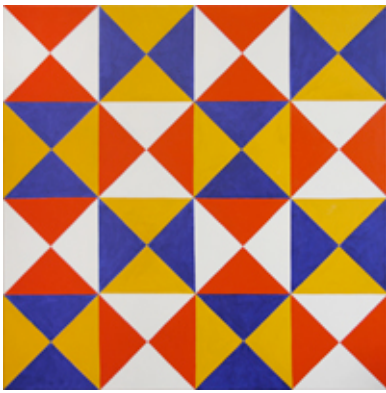
In 2013, the prospect of a large wall painting commission required a different approach. As Westfall addressed the proposal for a sequence of six soaring twenty-two foot vertical walls, he decided to slice and re-proportion segments from recent compositions, expanding them to the scale of the architecture. Sometimes he retained compositional anchors at the edge, but often, and importantly, he unmoored the structures in a way that began to imply fields that extend beyond the physical boundaries of the format.

One of the structures he looked to for the project was a dazzlingly colorful diamond patterned painting. In the process of making one of a still ongoing series of harlequin paintings, he noticed that the white space around the diamonds prior to filling them all with color breathed air into the composition. The inclusion of expanses of white created a space that Westfall describes as "mentholated" and this effect was incorporated in his largest wall paintings to date: the forty-five foot long *Canterbury*, created for Art OMI, and *Stars and Candy Wrappers*, which ran a hundred feet around all four walls of the Nachman Gallery in the museum at the University of California Santa Barbara. (They also commissioned *Argus*, a permanent work on an exterior wall).

The repercussions of these two new aspects that emerged in the recent wall paintings – the uncontained compositional field and the aeration of the color system, along with a new tweak involving a subtly destabilizing skew to the picture plane – can now be seen in the central group of large new paintings included in the current exhibition. They represent a striking advance in a body of work that is simultaneously intellectual, pastoral, zen and pop, indebted to the likes of Mondrian, Matisse, John McLaughlin and Stuart Davis yet thoroughly forward-looking and optimistically inclined. The



Reclining Harlequin, 2015,
78 x 66", oil and alkyd on canvas



Fugue, 2016, 36 x 36",
oil and alkyd on canvas



Sunshower, 2016, 26 x 24",
oil and alkyd on canvas

paintings in the exhibition demonstrate a certain brand of agile pictorial thinking that has always exemplified the best of Stephen Westfall's work.

Stephen Westfall (b. 1953) received his MFA in 1978 from the University of California, Santa Barbara. His first solo show was at Tracey Garet in New York's East Village in 1984. Exhibitions followed during the 1980s and 90s at Daniel Newburg Gallery, New York; Galerie Paal, Munich, Germany; Galerie Wilma Lock, St. Gallen, Switzerland; Andre Emmerich Gallery, New York; and Galerie Zurcher, Paris, France. Westfall has been represented by Lennon, Weinberg since 1997 and has had seven exhibitions at their locations in Soho and Chelsea in New York. He had his first show with David Richard Gallery in Santa Fe, New Mexico in 2015 and has recently collaborated with Polly Apfelbaum on exhibitions presented at Clement & Schneider in Bonn, Germany in 2014 and at The Suburban in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 2015, where he showed rugs recently woven under his direction in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Westfall's work has been included in several important thematic exhibitions of abstract paintings, including *Conceptual Abstraction* at the Hunter College Art Gallery in 2012. Survey exhibitions of his work were presented at Colgate University in 2000 and Western Carolina University in 1999.

He installed his first monumental wall paintings at Solvent Space in Richmond, Virginia in 2007, followed by others at the American Academy in Rome in 2010, and a permanent work installed at the Mason Gross Performing Arts Center at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey in 2014. An exhibition at Art OMI in 2014 featured two very large wall paintings. He was commissioned by the Museum of Art, Architecture and Design at the University of California Santa Barbara in 2015 to create a permanent outdoor wall painting and a second large work for the museum's Nachman Gallery. A wall painting installation in the AT&T Lobby at the McNay Art Museum in San Antonio, Texas remains on view through July 2016.

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, the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the UBS Art Collection.

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*.

For additional information, please contact Mary Shah at 212-941-0012 or mary@lennonweinberg.com