

ALEXANDRE GALLERY

THE WALLSTREET JOURNAL

'Stephen Westfall: New Works'

Lennon, Weinberg Inc.

(514 W. 25th St.; 212-941-0012)

Through Dec. 20



Passenger, 2008, 28-1/4 x 22-1/2", Oil on canvas

The painter and critic Stephen Westfall (b. 1953) engages, somewhat offhandedly, with the tradition of flat, hard-edged abstraction. A new grouping of his signature pattern-paintings, in which syncopated, boldly colored stripes, rectangles and triangles activate the surface of the canvas, brightens the long, narrow gallery at Lennon, Weinberg.

The candy-colored show of a dozen easel-scale oils and one large site-specific acrylic wall painting is joyous, full of punch, and not too visually demanding. Mr. Westfall works with the grid, optical figure/ground effects, overlap and repetition. His kaleidoscopic forms adhere to strict geometric rules -- as if starbursts had been sent to military school. In "Candyman" and "Hermes," diagonal stripes converge into "V" forms at the centerline of the canvas. In other works, the paintings are divided into grids, a diminution of concentric frames, or into four squares of diagonal stripes overlaid with other colors. The most successful painting on view is "Passenger," in which an armature dominated by two vertical black stripes creates spatial tension, suggesting that the left

side of the composition is closer than the right. "Passenger," introducing dynamic equilibrium, feels born of the painting studio; most of the other paintings might work better as elegant scarves. This exhibit does not always meet the demands of abstraction, but it satisfies the sweet tooth of design.