

ALEXANDRE GALLERY

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ART REVIEW

By PETER PLAGENS

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

Stephen Westfall: Crispy Fugue State

[Lennon, Weinberg](#)
514 W. 25th St., (212) 941-0012

Through July 29

Geometric abstract painting generally has to have a theory behind it, or at least some sort of system at work, to be

more than mere decoration. The prime example is Piet Mondrian's "neoplasticism." Even so, there is such a thing as serious geometric abstraction based on taste. And the newest work of Stephen Westfall (b. 1953) is a good instance of this sort of art that's worth thinking about and looking at.

Although the art-history-savvy Mr. Westfall, who teaches at Bard College, acknowledges a debt to Mondrian (and to Matisse, Stuart Davis and some art from ancient Rome), in these 11 paintings, done during the past three years, he's very much his

own man. As he told an interviewer for the blog "Two Coats of Paint" last year, "paintings come to me whole," and via a pencil, ruler and some Photoshop for "a general idea of color distribution" they make their way onto canvas.

Most of the pictures in the exhibition, which range from 2 to 7 feet on a side, are emphatically oriented on the diagonal (brightly colored diamonds and triangles are Mr. Westfall's favorite shapes), with the inclusion of generous areas of white. In the artist's felicitous phrase, they make the pictorial space "mentholated." The show's overall flavor is that of brainy sensuousness—relatively rare in today's gallery fare.