

John Pittman

Grace

November 4 - December 16, 2017



The mention of monochromatic painting or geometric abstraction tends to provoke an anticipation of flat arrangements of shapes applied to a single surface. Of course, considerations of space can and do come into play within such compositions; think of the straightest of Barnett Newman's zips, establishing spatial difference through a radically simple divide. Or beyond the frame when the picture's role as an object within a space is emphasized, like with the folded layers of Dorothea Rockburne's assembled drawings and prints, or the shapes and proportions of many Blinky Palermo works. Through a series of overlapping, yet porous strategies, delivered through their own autonomous architectures, the paintings comprising John Pittman's exhibition are able to satisfy both conceptions of space, seemingly moving into and out of themselves.

Regards,

Whether monochromatic, or duochromatic, each painting vibrates with a specificity of color: *this* green, *this* blue, *this* red. Intersecting gray lines suggest painted divisions of shapes, but prove to be shadows cast due to the slight separation in height between the panels constructing the painting's surfaces and frame. Each piece becomes a painting in relief; a composite of multiple flat, painted surfaces, rather than a single flat, painted surface. Some sections recede, while others protrude. These spatial shifts resonate with the gallery's architecture, made up of varying rectilinear shapes and planes, allowing the paintings to push and pull into and out of the overall arrangement of the exhibition. Just as the relationship to the space forces a sort of heaving out from the works, the qualities of the surfaces bring us in closer. Not only are we not dealing with a single painted surface for each painting, but the surfaces themselves are anything but flat, having been built up with paste and carved into before, during and after the painting process. Composed in the third dimension (Pittman does not make preparatory drawings), each piece is its own unique size, showcasing the significance of variation within a body of work that appears to be leaning more heavily on repetition. The paintings in this exhibition are some of the most recent in his ongoing series started in 2002 of abstract paintings and sculptures consisting exclusively of perpendicular and parallel shapes. Each painting is titled with a number, and other descriptive language, which locates them within the series while also indicating important aspects of their own individual making, for example #261 – *Circle In Square (Green)* or #184 – *Upright Sable*. Through this committed and methodical approach, Pittman takes the time and space to create particular, harmonious structures, ultimately arriving at a state of graceful unity within each piece, and his practice as a whole.

This is Pittman's first solo exhibition in 13 years. He has lived and worked in and around Chicago since moving here in 1971 to enroll at the School of the Art Institute, where he earned his MFA. Pittman's work has been shown at many venues over the past five decades, including The Art Institute of Chicago; Martos Gallery, NY; Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco; Phyllis Kind Gallery, Chicago and New York; The Herron School of Art + Design, Indianapolis; and Roy Boyd Gallery, Chicago.