



STEWART GOLDMAN
CINCINNATI

Old Square/New Square, Stewart Goldman's one-person show, unites two seemingly unconnected streams of practice [Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery; April 7—June 17, 2006]. Now seventy and retired from the Fine Arts Department at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, the artist puts his dynamic color sense to inventive ends in this series of square abstract paintings. He pursues another form of abstraction in his wall drawings. Executed in colored electric tape outlined in charcoal pencil or china marker, the drawings bristle with political overtones. The paintings are, for the most part, gorgeously apolitical.

Artists of Goldman's generation trained in abstraction. By contrast, he turned to representation for many fruitful years before recently going back to his academic roots with the advantage of a career's worth of experience. These paintings grew out of watercolor landscapes he made in Germany in the 1990s. In their transformation into oil paintings, all pictorial elements were discarded, perspective dumped for the push/pull of color against color, horizon line erased in favor of a flat, hard plane. Despite the artist's disavowal of pictorial intent, these works resemble topographic maps or the earth seen from the air.

Works in the gallery's generous entryway forecast what's inside. Drawn with red electric tape, *Lodz Bridge III* suggests political concerns made more evident in the subsequent wall drawings. Three paintings are hung next to the gallery door. Their grid structure coolly exposed, they are clear statements of the artist's intent. *Sweet Sixteen* mischievously incorporates its titular number of squares.

Inside, the paintings are often larger. The texture of their linen support becomes an element of many works, such as *Red Sea*, 2003-2004. Less prominent, the grid nonetheless continues to anchor their compositions.

Goldman expertly works minor variations in hue to major effect. In *Yellow Stripe*, 2003, a yellow as pure as spring daffodils fills the upper left corner, moving on to assume various shades of orange. This whole mutation is set off by judiciously located white and a shot of teal. White, indeed, is a constant in most of the paintings and suggests, for Goldman, things left out. In his recent tribute to one of his favorite artists, *Turner's View*, 2005, yellow ascends into orange as two wavy bands of white enter from the left to float across the surface.

Wiedy's View, 2001, and *Elysian*, 2001-2004, both consist of several individual paintings on panel—a flatter, harder surface than linen. In *Wiedy's View*, individual pieces relate but do not expressly mate. More interestingly, the composition of *Elysian* infers the fate of a line that traverses the interstitial void by integrating the space between panels into its composition. The panels and the spaces between them are, in fact, identically sized.

Imperialist, 2003, a stridently red, white, and blue painting, leads into the gallery where wall maps of three cities—New Orleans, Washington D.C., and Baghdad—have been outlined in colored electric tape. Pulled taut and then released, the tape droops and clumps while its original position remains indicated by lines on the wall. Maps are abstractions. The juxtaposition of these maps in this room begs the viewer to connect these cities. Tension and energy inform the paintings in one way; they also sustain these wall drawings, albeit differently. Ostensibly working in two directions, Goldman may, in fact, be absolutely centered.

—Jane Durrell

ABOVE: Stewart Goldman, *Flag*, 2006, electric tape and latex wall paint, 21.5 x 37.5 inches (courtesy of the artist and Alice F. and Harris K. Weston Art Gallery)