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A Planar Garden



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Curated by Stephen Westfall

Extended through Saturday, February 1, 2025

Alexandre

25 East 73rd Street, New York 10021

New York . . . Alexandre is pleased to present *A Planar Garden*, an intergenerational group exhibition organized by curator and artist Stephen Westfall. Reflecting upon the boundless referential possibilities of planarity in painting, the show will feature works by artists including Polly Apfelbaum, Will Barnet, Alexander Calder, Suzanne Caporaël, Ralston Crawford, Stuart Davis, Arthur Dove, Suzan Frecon, Mary Heilmann, Carmen

Herrera, Harriet Korman, John McLaughlin, Odili Donald Odita, Joanna Pousette-Dart, Patricia Treib, and Stephen Westfall.

In Westfall's words:

"I've long felt that we've needed to recalibrate our expectations of planar abstraction to include its potentials for referentiality, memory, and play; in short, abundance. This doesn't have to mean a canvas teeming with incident. 'Planarity' in painting implies areas of color rather than an accumulation of marks, after all. But color and shape are referential, as is the object of the painting itself. We can recall light and shadow, weather and time of day, when looking at even color filling out a shape. A synesthete might experience flavor, scent, and even sound. A concert of flat colored shapes can reference a riot of associations, humidities, memories of rooms, textiles, the silhouettes of flowers and birds, and the trajectories of ships and jets. Even the perpendicular planes of seemingly reductive abstract painting draws us into a dance between distance and proximity. Think of the far horizons embedded in the granular intimacy of an Agnes Martin painting...

...Not all planar art is painting. Planes can be cut out of sheet metal, or rolled out in ceramic tablets. A stabile shows us planes in air. Above all, I think those artists who arrive at a planar language are finding their way to a more pronounced engagement with architecture. A plane of color in paint, paper decoupage (which is how Matisse referred to his cut outs), or ceramic glaze invokes walls and panes of colored glass. There is a material idealization, if such an oxymoronic thing could exist. Planarity projects into a room rather than offering a window or a doorway out of one. As with icons, planarity in modern and contemporary art says the distances offered are actually present. So, here is a garden of planes showing their plumage and cleared paths, their intensifications of objecthood, their

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gestures in space, their areas and edges.”

Stephen Westfall (American, b. 1953) has charted a course between post-minimalist geometries and a Pop-inflected awareness of a painting as a thing in the world. The brightly colored diamonds, triangles and trapezoids in his most recent canvases are conjoined into dynamic compositional skeins that seem to lean into space rather than recede. Drawing on Caucasian and Navajo rugs, medieval heraldry, Byzantine floor tile, early twentieth century abstraction, architecture and Pop, Minimalist and post-Minimalist painting, Westfall’s abstraction is deeply acculturated while formally honed into an active, perceptual immediacy. This is the first exhibition he has curated at the gallery.

The gallery will present an exhibition of Stephen Westfall’s new paintings and works on paper in fall 2025.

Image: Stephen Westfall, *Summit*, 2024, oil and alkyd on canvas, 36 x 30 inches, Courtesy Alexandre Gallery, New York.

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