

BRIDGETTE **MAYER** GALLERY

Joe McAleer's Multifaceted Abstractions

Joe McAleer's paintings engage us as participants in a complex perceptual game. Comprised of contrasting patterns of color, texture, and form, which fill the canvas from edge to edge, his restless abstractions elude a fleeting encounter. Rather, they absorb our attention with rhythmic structures and visual anomalies designed to stimulate and perplex our senses.

McAleer's kaleidoscopic abstractions have their basis in the humble Modernist grid, which provides him a logical structure for intuition and invention. He toys with the grid's neutrality and stability; collaging over it, painting into it, and thwarting its inherent flatness with dimensional illusion. In his latest paintings McAleer summons uncanny spatial paradox with the simple isomorphic projection of a cube. A versatile motif with an inherently animate quality, this "jumpsquare" appears to advance and recede into space even when presented as a single module in minimal works such as *In or Out* (2007). Multiplied four times over in *Alligator* (2008), the form energizes the flat plane of the painting, setting up a chain reaction that seems to reverberate beyond its borders.

This lively sensation culminates in McAleer's *Optic Diamond* series, in which the jumpsquare is stacked repeatedly like brickwork across the entirety of the composition. In *Optic Diamond IV*, (2009), this design interrupts the painting's surface in alternating waves of value and hue. At a distance the black and white saw tooth pattern can flip-flop in an instant, yielding an overall optical palpitation. Up close, we discern that the multicolor fields are collaged reproductions of modern paintings partially obscured by McAleer's brush, a tacit acknowledgement of the historical foundations of the artist's endeavor. He makes just such an homage explicit in *Jump Boogie Woogie* (2010), whose title and palette pay direct homage to Mondrian's pioneering abstraction. In this instance, McAleer has completely subsumed his underlying collage—and painting's past—in accumulated layers of vibrant primary color.

The undeniably restless configurations of *Boogie Woogie* and the *Optic Diamonds* is enhanced by their rhomboid format that transgresses the stability offered by the horizontal and vertical boundaries of traditional painting, thus activating the surrounding environment in response. Transcending the language of formalist painting to which he is heir, McAleer's spectral art forces us to recalibrate our senses, making us keenly aware the act of seeing is a more dynamic and open-ended enterprise than we presume.

Joe Houston