

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY

Tim McFarlane *"Logical Progression"* a catalogue essay by: Lilly Wei

Tim McFarlane is a young abstract painter, a designation considered an oxymoron by some, an endangered species by others. McFarlane himself disregards both attitudes, more engaged in the practice of painting than theories about it. In the most recent examples of this practice, all from 2004 and 2005, McFarlane, a Philadelphia-based artist, has re-considered his syntax, his broad Sean Scully-like stripes and compositions shifting into smaller, laddered units, resulting in more disjunctive, nimble arrangements. Based on modernist grids deconstructed and deracinated, with some of the freedom of graffiti, his proliferating, superimposed systems and webs recall scaffolds, schematized skylines, tenement walls, multi-windowed corporate facades or other, undesignated urban structures. Curiously, a number of these constructs also suggest trees, or other organic entities, blending a sense of the natural with the geometric. Light in tone, the hues cool and warm, even hot at times, the primaries just off, black (for anchorage) and white (for light), color and form are tightly partnered as these exuberant, rhythmic pictures rock to some syncopated city beat.

McFarlane's exhilarating abstractions are both referential and not—a not unusual contemporary strategy—with titles that squeeze in narrative as well as description such as *Raw Nerve*, *Intervening Dream*, *A Dream Askew*, *Free State*. Another is *Pink Baby!!!* (a distant relative of Matisse's *Pink Nudes*) a funny, self-assembled, robot-like figure in bright pink, waving what might be arms and legs, but still more abstract than *anime*. Some of these paintings also refer to the artist's earlier canvases, quoting his previous stripe paintings as a motif. Clean, complex, with lovely passages of loose brushwork and increasingly assured, McFarlane's engaging abstractions are urban studies that depict civilization and its contents with humour, irony and above all, invigorating, blissful energy.

Lilly Wei

Lilly Wei is a New York-based independent curator, essayist and critic who writes for several publications in the United States and abroad. A frequent contributor to *Art in America*, she is also a contributing editor at *ARTnews* and *Art Asia Pacific*.