

BRIDGETTE MAYER GALLERY



art

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Joe McAleer's 'Optic Diamonds' painting show is at Bridgette Mayer.

Op artist refining his glorious grids

By Victoria Donohoe
FOR THE INQUIRER

Banish gridlock? Joe McAleer shows how in his "Optic Diamonds" painting show at Bridgette Mayer Gallery.

Interested in making pictorial space literal, and in the simple grid's capacity to vibrate, McAleer often makes the geometric form turn dynamic by using color. Beyond that, he contrasts the grid's vibrations with the narrow line that's in his paintings as a physical signifier between the varied shapes.

So the "hard" abstract style of this patternmaker from Moorestown is modified in various ways, both by paint and by his use of photographic montages as minor elements most recently interwoven in these works. Op art, you may recall, is a hard-edged, surgically precise painting style that emerged in the early 1960s as an

alternative to abstract expressionism, much of its illusion being attained through line. But the impulse goes back further for McAleer, to Dutch artist Piet Mondrian, especially in his use of high-key color in one of these paintings.

And McAleer's particular contribution as an op artist is what he calls "jumpsquare," a basic form he developed while working on his grid paintings in 2007. Its frequent use here gives his canvases additional depth and focus, while avoiding a manufactured look. McAleer's works are becoming increasingly successful as he reduces the number of variables and deals with a design pattern we all can more readily figure out and appreciate.

Bridgette Mayer Gallery, 709 Walnut, Phila. To May 29. Tue-Sat 10-6. Free. 215-413-8893.



"Optic Diamond III" by Joe McAleer. His exhibit runs through May 29.

Victoria Donohoe, "Op artist refining his glorious grids," The Philadelphia Inquirer, May 21, 2010