

Lloyd Martin

Lloyd Martin lives and works in Rhode Island. His achievement embodies Robert Hughes' observation—made some 20 years ago—that Manhattan is no longer a creative center. A marketing center, certainly, but vital for the development of a painter's talent? Not any more.

Martin has been exhibiting annually with Stephen



Dissever, 2010, Oil, mixed media on canvas, 66 x 120 inches

Haller Gallery for a full decade. Given the diagrammatic, linear rigor of work that grants no quarter to expressive accidents, **it is an impressive production schedule. And a welcome one.** He continues to renew his signature format with each exhibition. This latest is **his handsomest show to date.** It is also his liveliest, rambunctious in its aggressive use of high-keyed color and the stacking of his characteristic ribbons of paint into dominant rectangles.

The fascination of Martin's painting lies in its pitch-perfect balance between the constraints of a formal grid and the rhythmic movement of horizontal bands within it. The tactile materiality of the paint, contained within strict, incised margins, contrasts with the immateriality of the image. Color is arranged antiphonally, occurring in alternating patterns of call-and-response. An orange band across the bottom of a canvas echoes a vertical of the same heated color set across a span of neutrals. A single red bar draws the eye to the center of "**Dissever**" in terse rejoinder to the red plane that commands the upper left corner.

One inventive alignment follows another. The lessons of Mondrian are evident throughout, most vividly in

Martin's attention to intervals between forms, the lacings of black bars and control of repetitions of hue. "**Red Breach**" is an eloquent testament to fecund tension between a self-imposed stasis—the fixity of forms—and the fluid movement of paint within and between the forms.

Decades ago, Fairfield Porter said out loud something that artists know but tend to leave unspoken: To a certain extent, every artist addresses himself to other artists. Recognizing that, it is safe to say that a good number of painters will leave this show feeling much like the narrator of Cynthia Ozick's "Usurpation." The narrator of the story is a writer who attends a manuscript reading at the 92nd Street Y. It is a marvelous manuscript; the very thing the narrator had wanted to write but never did. She is convinced the author "usurped" her intentions and wrote the thing before she had the chance to. She covets it.

On view is work that other painters, like Ozick's desirous narrator, could easily wish to have made. The pleasure of it derives from a **pictorial intelligence** that has no quality of mimicry or glibness about it. **Each arrangement results from manifold and complex decisions that aspire to beauty—nothing more and absolutely nothing less.**

-Maureen Mullarkey

Through June 25, Stephen Haller Gallery, 524 W. 26th St., 212-741-7777



Red Breach, 2011, Oil, mixed media on canvas, 66 x 72 inches