

Chromatic Conversations

July 13 – August 17, 2024

Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present *Chromatic Conversations*, featuring works by Gabriele Evertz, James Little, Doug Ohlson, Robert Swain, and Sanford Wurmfeld. Color itself is the primary subject matter for these five New York-based painters, though each applies their own unique artistic approach to its exploration. The dialogue between artworks mirrors the artistic exchange amongst their creators, reflecting their years of personal and professional relationships. All are seasoned New York art educators: Little teaches at the Art Students League and Evertz, Ohlson, Swain, and Wurmfeld taught together over several decades at Hunter College.

Each of these painters is primarily concerned with the meaning and experience of color, as well as the ways it informs and is mediated by shape, movement, and optical response. Their investigations of color relationships may appear straightforward at first glance, but under closer scrutiny reveal technical feats arising from many years of practice and research into color theory and visual phenomenology. The conversations amongst and within these works reflect the multivalent experience of color perception and response: an emotive reaction centered on sensory or spiritual experience coexisting with the logical analysis of their organization.

Evertz engages her extensive historical and theoretical knowledge of color with the goal of stimulating physical, psychological, and emotional responses in the viewer. Considered orchestrations of crisp vertical and diagonal sequences incite oscillating, almost electric responses in the mind's eye. As these effects are generated purely through the act of viewing them, the paintings become fully complete only when they are being observed.

The satiny sheen of Little's paintings is developed through a painstaking process of mixing hand-blended pigments into layer upon layer of hot wax, creating a fleshy, vigorous surface which directionally animates arrhythmic spikes of concentrated color. His studies on paper, executed in raw pigment, create visceral impressions of vertical and lateral motion through cleverly juxtaposed arrangements of chevrons and stripes.

The Ohlson paintings on view utilize color palettes that may at first appear wild and unconventional, but harmonize and invigorate his compositions in ways both unexpected and instinctively satisfying. Hard edged rectilinear forms retreat and advance as their edges feather, dissolve, and float on hazy seas of underpainting, the kinetic effects relying as much on the overlapping and abutting shapes as on the visual jolts where their vivid colors collide.

Swain's crisply gridded compositions provide inert containers into which individual squares of color can be applied in their full, undivided expression. They operate not just as discrete units unto themselves, but as dynamic entities activated and transformed by their relationships to the colors around them. Their carefully calibrated placements provide a rational fixed point for the subjective response of the viewer, which is endlessly variable based upon shifting perceptual circumstances.

Wurmfeld employs a system of misaligned grids, a method born of a studio accident in 1985 which he continues to exploit to great effect. The paintings combine subtle graduated color shifts, mixed by eye without the aid of a mathematical system, with gridlines of incrementally varying widths. The combination creates a shimmering moiré effect that undulates and vibrates on the retina, transmuting the paintings into dazzling chromatic auras liberated from their component elements.