

*Order and Sensibility:  
The Paintings of Jeanette Fintz*  
by Carter Ratcliff

Among Jeanette Fintz's earliest paintings are landscapes: detailed representations of specific places. Now she constructs her images on a scaffolding of geometric givens: grids built from straight lines and reiterated curves. Setting out from particulars of tree branch and cloud, she has arrived in a realm of sweepingly general forms. Or so it seems until we note the grandly structural impulses that organize her images of the Maine woods and other landscapes. Having seen this, we are primed to notice all that is specific rather than general—all that is personal and expressive rather than anonymously conceptual—in her gridded paintings. Fintz has sought order from the outset of her career and in her search she has always imprinted the clarities of her pictorial structures with lush subtleties of feeling.

A field of cubical forms fills the right-hand side of *Traveler's Reflection III*, 2015—rather, this is what we deduce from the play of black and yellow lines that Fintz has laid over a field of green. Deduction is necessary because she has not outlined the cubes in full. This painting shows us a grid in the process of completion. Or possibly the grid is vanishing. We can be sure only that we are seeing a single moment in a transition so complex that the 60- and 120-degree angles of the predominant cubes have generated thirty-degree variants that hover like ghosts in the green field, even as they structure the primary shapes on the left-hand side of the canvas. As *Traveler's Reflection III*, 2015, Fintz ushers the timeless and static geometries of cube, hexagon, and triangle into a temporal zone, we might well imagine that she is the traveler, reflecting on experiences that are of course individual, not universal. Yet she travels confidently in the realm of universals.

Though *Traveler's Reflection III* is a hard-edged painting, several of its large yellow triangles bear drips of paint, reminders of earlier stages in Fintz's evolution. One thinks of the painterly brushwork in her landscapes as well as the drips and elegant smudges of pigment in the ellipse paintings of a decade ago; and in the *Ecstatic Nature* series, 2007-2009, luminous passages of dripped and flowing color often engulf the regular patterns that spread through these paintings. Always present, if not always visible, the geometries of Fintz's recent work have served not only as visual motifs but also as guiding principles. As her art evolved, implicit forms became more explicit; and in *Wordline Scriber*, a painting from 2016, the image consists entirely of straight lines and sharply delineated arcs. Embracing these Euclidean clarities, the painting brings out their potential for transformation, surprise, and an exalted ambiguity.

The sublime playfulness of *Wordline Scriber* draws us in, making it impossible merely to register the painting as an image. To perceive its intersecting, interwoven forms is to interpret them, and there is no end to this process because our conclusions are always provisional. Further looking reveals further complexities of volume and space and their interaction—complexities that are all the more vivid because Fintz has confined the colors of *Wordline Scriber* to blue on white. However, this palette is not as restricted as it may seem when we focus on this painting's forms. Closer looking reveals several shades of blue, and there are modulations in both the tone and texture of the white background. Space opens up, shifts in light are implied. These subtleties fill the painting with a stately flicker, as traces of personal intention alternate with the supra-personal premises of geometry. We see this alternation throughout Fintz's oeuvre, for her sensibility touches every detail of every painting and yet, as I've suggested, every detail touches on the universal.