

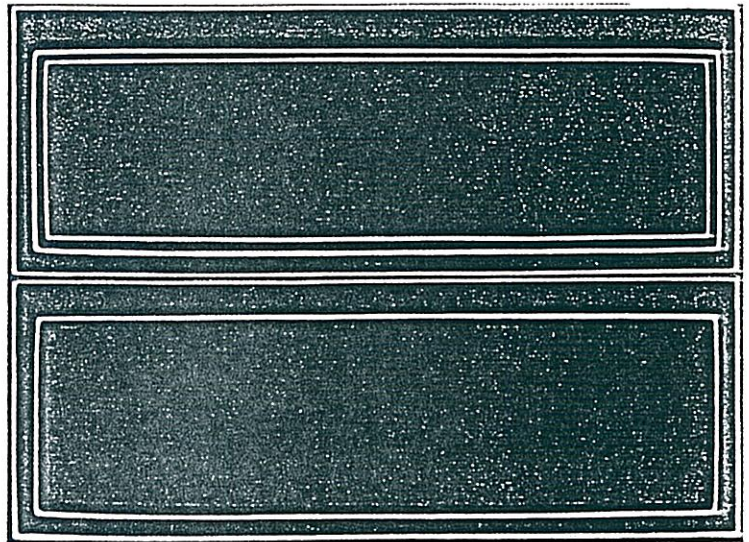
Boyce, Roger, "Reviews: Dan Walsh @ PCG", *Art in America*, July 2003, p. 90, ills.

**Dan Walsh
at Paula Cooper**

The main gallery of Paula Cooper's ground-floor Chelsea space resembles a grand museum chamber. This impression was abetted by Dan Walsh's low-slung, monumentally horizontal paintings. Averaging 60 by 90 inches and hung 6 inches from the floor, Walsh's eight recent canvases created a discontinuous polychrome wainscot which briefly recalled the proportional organization of Pompeiian First Style wall painting.

As the viewer approached the paintings, this reading dissipated. In its place shades of geometric minimalists, such as Josef Albers, were summoned. However, Walsh's thin tints, dry primaries, inconstant line and shape take the starch out of formal/minimalist associations. While the grid underlies much of his work, and linear geometry is (irregularly) employed to break up and surround space, there is a notable absence of essentialist asceticism in his approach to arithmetical abstraction. As in the case of Mary Heilmann, who uses purposefully careless geometry, Walsh wants to make serious painting—and have fun.

These new paintings fall into two broad compositional categories. In *Classique* and *True Blues*, the painter delineates recumbent rectangular shapes and sets them against darker grounds. These shapes read as weighty and monolithic despite the fact that they have no modeled volume or mass. Pairs of small "blocks" painted below, which seem to "support" the over-size cryptal forms, emphasize the illusory sense of weight. In works such as *Study* and *Manifold*, Walsh multiplies and reduces the scale of his compositional units. Underlying and distributing six small, canopic shapes across *Study's* face is a long, horizontal (shelflike) line. As the painted line traverses the picture plane, it appears to sag under its boxy load.



Dan Walsh: *True Blues*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 66 by 90 inches; at Paula Cooper.

The artist's Pantone color play, which brings to mind the eccentric palette of the late Paul Feeley, highlights the paintings' perceptual inconsonance. In *Study*, he foregrounds violet squares—with glowing white coronas— atop a milky salmon ground. In *Manifold*, 36 electric-blue blocks are "shelved" against a glowing tangerine expanse.

Walsh pipes subversive representational tropes and associative color schema into the rarefied air of purist abstraction—tactics employed by other contemporary hard-edge painters, such as Gary Hume and Clay Ketter. However, Walsh's paintings manage to avoid the forensic coldness often associated with such maneuvers. It's as if decaying tones from the first chords of abstraction, struck in the dawning years of the 20th century, gain in harmonic sweetness as they pass through time and resonate in these canvases.

—Roger Boyce