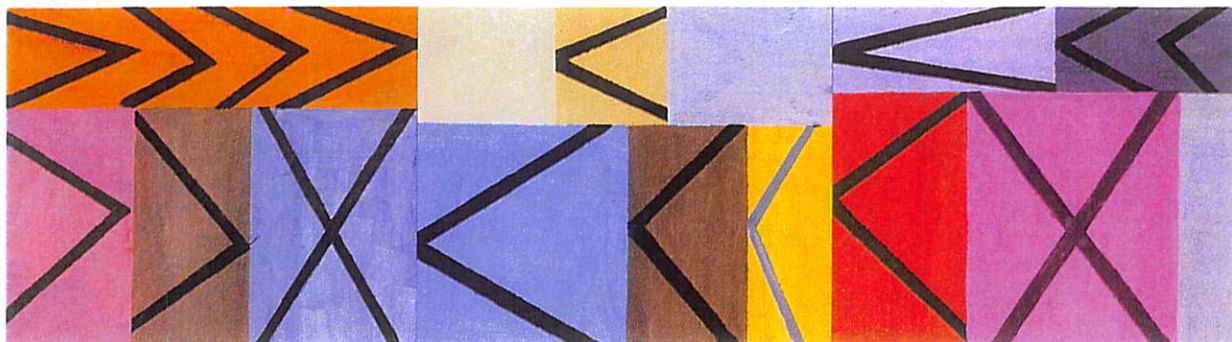


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Terri Rolland: *Goldfinch*, 2009, acrylic on panel, 8 by 30 inches; at Linda Durham.

SANTA FE
TERRI ROLLAND
LINDA DURHAM

Terri Rolland has always struggled to infuse her formal painting practice with political content, and that struggle was the subject of the work. In the past, she relied on semifi gurative narratives of confrontation and opposition, with Klee-like personages marching across fields of gridlike brushstrokes. In recent paintings, she has turned entirely to abstraction, though when speaking about it she maintains this is connected to her interest in contemporary issues of the small, slow and sustainable.

Rooted in the natural world and music (as evidenced in their titles), each of the nine triptychs in this exhibition consists of equal-sized parts placed side-by-side, creating an overall horizontal rectangle. Seven small triptychs, ranging in size from 8 by 30 inches to 11 by 42 inches, are acrylic on panel; two larger ones—24 by 84 inches—are on canvas. It's the panel paintings, radiant in their white frames, that steal the show. The exhibition's title, "Slow Thirds," suggested music, and, indeed, the repetition of shapes and colors, with slight tonal shifts, incrementally built a staccato rhythm of start and stop, and struck an extended chord of sameness and difference.

In one of two series loosely based on the grid, each part of the triptych is divided into three roughly equal horizontal bands. Each band is then vertically sectioned into squares and rectangles, many of which contain a smaller square or squares within. The result is interlocked blocks of carefully considered color—

chalky, matte, cosmeticlike tints—in stacked units not quite lining up and jostling for space. Figure and ground merge, and there is no focal point: everything is equal. Occasionally a square or rectangle goes off the edge or overlaps another, opening up what is essentially a shallow space. The paintings are executed wet into wet, with brushstrokes and layers of undercolor visible; the surface and the quirky accidents along the edges where color meets color, indexical signs of maker and making, activate the paintings.

The second series consists of compositions in two unequal horizontal bands. Instead of shapes within shapes, Rolland has painted, on top of the colored rectangular areas, forward (>) and backward (<) directional signs, intended to move the eye across the painting, along with X's that mark spots for lingering. Claimed as a personal vocabulary of sorts, these linear signs, quickly painted in single strokes along a straightedge, are nonetheless not hard-edged, but clearly handmade. They do not cross over from panel to panel, but coexist in their individual spaces, albeit pushing at the boundaries. In *Goldfinch* (2009), the repeated signs, while varied in angle and thickness, appear to be in movement; however, all signs point inward from the painting edges to what is ultimately a self-contained space.

Rolland's paintings have always had a directness and lack of pretense. These are qualities she's held on to in this current body of work, as she comfortably shifts into a conversation with other formalist abstract painters—Sonia Delaunay,

Thornton Willis and Harriet Korman come to mind. Yet in their strategies of slow passage, coexistence of parts and self-containment, perhaps the works hint as well at her ongoing political interests.

—Harmony Hammond