

RICHARD DAVEY ON NED EVANS' RECENT PAINTINGS:

The first art book Ned Evans read was Josef Albers', *Interaction of Color*. He was 19, and these simple exercises had a profound impact on the young art student. They taught him how to look. They showed him how to see beyond specific shapes and be attentive to the exchange of energy that occurs at their edges, in that tidal zone of attraction and separation that draws an often imperceptible line between individual forms. He discovered that borders can be hard or soft, they can fizz or slowly hum, appear or disappear in the blink of an eye. Albers helped Evans to become attentive to the moments of inter-action that shape our experience of the world, encouraging him to move his gaze from the centre to the edge. He showed Evans that it is not the specific shape or color which matters, but the relationships that exist between things, the inter-actions that cause colors to be fluid and shapes to change.

Frank Stella also helped Evans focus on the border and follow the flow of energy along the edges of things. More significantly, he reinforced what Evans had already discovered with Albers, that the poetry and meaning of a painting are not dependent upon an explicit narrative or the expressive gestures that convey an artist's embodied presence. He came to realise that a painting doesn't have to be anything other than what it is: colored pigment on a surface.

What you see is what you get with Stella, and what you see is what you get with Evans: A structure in which color inter-actions take place. Evan's paintings are physical objects, constructions that declare their objecthood rather than shrinking into the wall to open up an illusory space. Even those painted on paper declare their substance, pushing away from the wall and thrusting out into the viewer's space. This functional and formal honesty reflects Evans abiding interest in the architecture of Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus, as well as his years of experience designing and constructing artist's studios and other projects.

Whilst working on these construction sites, overseeing the project and undertaking much of the work, Evans would record the process in photographs that captured small architectural details rather than the whole building. He would focus on the edges and joins, documenting those overlooked points of intersection and intervention where he knew it all came and held together.

This distinctive sensibility is reflected in Evans' most recent paintings, where his use of simple planes of color and interlocking shapes is not about exploring pattern or revisiting the formal relationships of minimalist repetition, but about revealing the moments of subtle vibration and visual energy that stitch forms together or push them apart. As our gaze travels along these boundary lines we feel the hum of constant inter-action as one color plays off another sending a subtle breath across their surfaces.

This sense of pulsating energy is reinforced by those areas where Evans disrupts the static blocks of color and sprays paint over a stencil of metal mesh to leave behind a honeycomb pattern. As this pattern crosses borders and blurs the solidity of his forms it creates areas of subtle spatial variation and scintillating light that cause our gaze to skitter and falter, trip up and stumble. We find ourselves lost in the oceanic depths of a rich chromatic space. But then at the periphery of our vision we feel a vibration, a persistent pulse that pulls us back to those compelling moments of dynamic inter-action. Our journey starts again, we pursue another line of visual enquiry, losing ourselves in the playful poetry of the edge.

There is an overpowering honesty in these paintings. They are works of color inter-action whose subject is color inter-action, nothing more. Yet looking at them can also provide a lesson in looking, encouraging us to notice the undercurrent of vibrations that animate the world.