

Boothe A Showstopper in Torrington

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Five Points Gallery in Torrington is ... hosting ... a spectacular array of Power Boothe's masterful paintings, some of the most mesmerizing work the plucky gallery has shown since its inception.

The former Dean of the Hartford Art School creates rhapsodic abstract canvases based on a grid pattern. But the grid is not sterile. It is not inert and it's not mechanical. Boothe's work moves beyond the cerebral frigidity of conceptual artists like Sol LeWitt, into a refreshingly intuitive painterly style.

Here are large – 72-inch by 72-inch – canvases of primarily one color – red, say or azure blue. Each is webbed over by a series of largely geometric patterns. Sometimes the patterns cut across in staccato diagonals. Other times, in long hyphens of primary colors. More often than not, these lines connect or at least relate in some way. In "Perfect Red," the lines arc and point in jigsaw like patterns that Boothe articulates with a slender blue line.

In "Doors for Dorothea," a largely white background is scudded up her and there with more translucent and textured areas, all of which is over scored by slim black lines that delineate space and depth. It's a hauntingly captivating image in the way that Boothe moves the viewer into regions of depth and then shuts the door, so to speak with more traditional two dimensional imagery.

Whatever the system Boothe employs to create these patterns, it is far from robotic. It is an emotional response to a world that demands to be divided up into spaces. In works like "Zino" Boothe creates a heavenly blue sky over which he imposes trim white lines that link and then evaporate. Occasionally, a narrow, baton-like black line divides this seraphic sphere.

It is as if Boothe is saying that even in the most paradisiacal vistas, we insist on an order, even if the order falls apart. Perhaps this marriage of intuition and order is a reminder that the visceral and the analytic are forever at loggerheads, the resolution of which can be beautiful to watch.