

*We become what we behold*—Marshall McLuhan

We live in an era that venerates speed and efficiency. Modern technology accelerates the pace of work, travel and communication, and possibilities expand before us. Not surprisingly, our aesthetic sensibilities are not immune to this pace. Bombarded by a steady stream of fleeting images and sound bites, we come to prize things fast, sleek and streamlined. However, this taste for speed and efficiency may come at significant personal costs, including a growing inability to slow down, a blunting of our sensibilities, and a decrease in our capacities for contemplation and reverie.

Fortunately the arts can offer points of respite where reflection and imagination are nourished. Within the visual arts abstract painting in particular beckons us to slow our pace and allow the work to wash over us. With no stories to tell or arguments to make, abstract art can nonetheless immerse our minds and senses in the contemplation of worlds or orders unseen and often sublime.

Jennifer Goodman's art is one such oasis. Her masterful and hard-won orchestrations of color, tone and geometric form both demand and richly reward slow looking. Departing from mainstream visual art, Goodman unabashedly seeks and achieves harmony and beauty in her work. More unusual still, she prizes moderation and restraint. Yet equally important, she seeks to deeply engage viewers in a process of active exploration and discovery.

At first glance, Goodman's compositions may appear straightforward and relatively uncomplicated. However, that apparent simplicity is highly deceptive. Through mastery of her visual vocabulary she establishes elegant states of dynamic equilibrium in her paintings and prints. Balance is achieved without stasis or rigidity via careful titrations of opposing visual weights, be they contrasts of color, tone, form or directional forces. Goodman fine-tunes each shape and color to allow it to both declare its identity, yet gently subside into an interlocking whole in which every element feels essential. We recognize this unity, but would be hard pressed to state its rules.

With each successive body of work Goodman reveals her need to push the boundaries of her chosen visual means and challenge herself with more difficult compositional problems. In her new work she displays a confidence that is reflected in both scale—most of the paintings exceed six feet in width or height—and a ramping up of the visual weights and forces she must harmonize. Across her current paintings and prints, Goodman has markedly intensified her colors. In the more grid-based compositions she must resolve individual rectangles of vibrant saturated color into larger balanced wholes. In her works dominated by strong diagonal forces, areas of saturated color are judiciously used to help maintain a taut state of equilibrium.

In *Dusk* our eyes are immediately drawn to a broad vertical band of rich yellows that threatens to divide an irregularly gridded field. Complex counterbalancing is achieved through small bars of equally intense hues that call attention both to themselves and to the overall structure of the composition. In *Virginia* bold diagonals create movement and spatial ambiguities. Just as surely as we are invited into the space, we are blocked by colors and shapes that assert the flatness of the picture plane. Diagonal forces are offset by the pull of small areas of heightened color and contained by bars of color that frame the top and bottom of the canvas. We are left to wonder at the overall harmony wrested from such compelling oppositions and contrasts. Smaller in scale, but equally ambitious in the harmonies achieved, Goodman's archival pigment prints reflect the artist's ongoing commitment to push personal boundaries, leaving us with intimations of new directions in her work.

If Marshall McLuhan is correct—that we become what we behold—then Jennifer Goodman's art can stimulate, nurture and refine our sensibilities—we need only slow down and look.

—Julie Karabenick