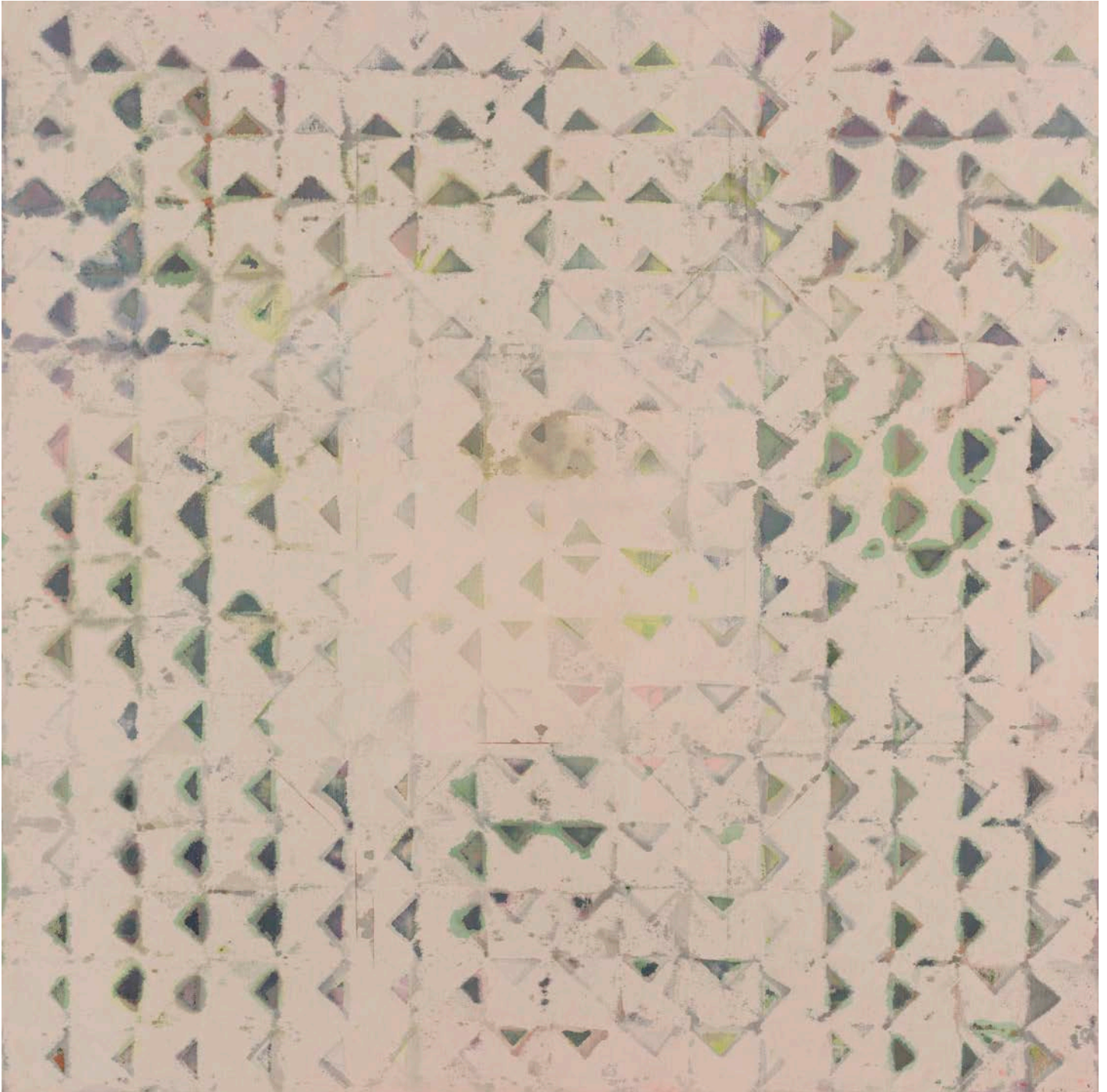


Lynne Golob Gelfman

English

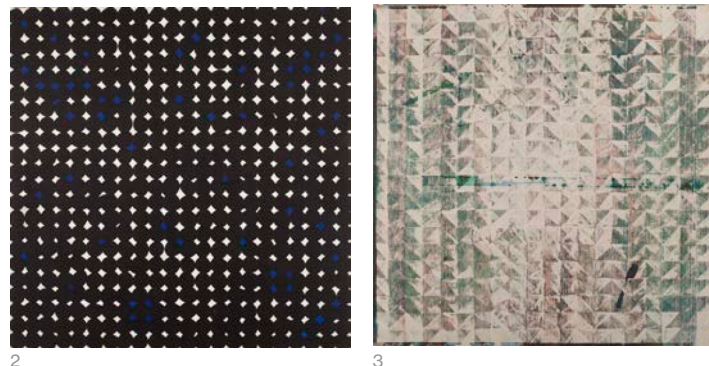


Grids: A Selection of Paintings by Lynne Golob Gelfman

This exhibition examines the paintings of Miami-based artist Lynne Golob Gelfman in relation to the modernist tradition of the grid. Through repetition of both linear and geometric forms, the artist's diverse series reveal her interest in late-modernist explorations of this structure, while concurrently evidencing her resistance to its formal rules and embrace of cool abstraction through her references to non-Western aesthetics and both the urban and natural landscape of Miami.

Gelfman's early training in her native New York involved exposure to late-modernist abstraction's emphasis on nonrepresentational forms and painting's self-conscious evidencing of its own materiality as a two-dimensional, rectilinear form. Grids served as one extreme example of these interests due to their exclusion of references to nature, mimesis, and any elements external to the space of painting itself. Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevich are early examples of artists engaged in investigations of this form, followed by artists such as Agnes Martin and Sol LeWitt in the 1960s. The art historian Rosalind Krauss, in her influential essay "Grids" from 1978, explores this aesthetic trajectory, describing the form as "mythic" in the way it came to reference painting's materiality while concurrently serving as a symbol of a new, nonreligious spirituality in modernism. Krauss states: "The grid's mythic power is that it makes us able to think we are dealing with materialism (or sometimes science, or logic) while at the same time it provides us with a release into belief (or illusion, or fiction)."¹

Gelfman's early New York works display these influences in her use of serial geometric forms. A work titled *circle blue* (1968) presents a grid made up of black circles. Each slightly irregular in shape, the circles' edges overlap, and their repetition creates small negative spaces that expose the white ground on which they are painted. Several of these diamond-like shapes are rendered in blue, creating irregularities in an otherwise highly ordered composition. *circle blue* is exemplary of the kind of grid paintings Gelfman was producing when she moved to Miami in 1972.



In Miami, the flat opacity of the forms in *circle blue* quickly began to feel out of place, more tied to the urban grids and the hard geometries of New York than to Miami's tropical flora and distinctive light. A significant development in the artist's work took place in 1974 when she noticed how the back of one of these early paintings revealed its colors and composition in a lightened and coarser version. She restretched and reworked the painting with this reverse side presented as the front, and titled it *thru green 1*. Gelfman was drawn to the irregular ways in which the paint had seeped through the canvas, giving it a sense of dappled light and a particular weathered and worn quality. She was also attracted to the role chance played in the resulting composition.

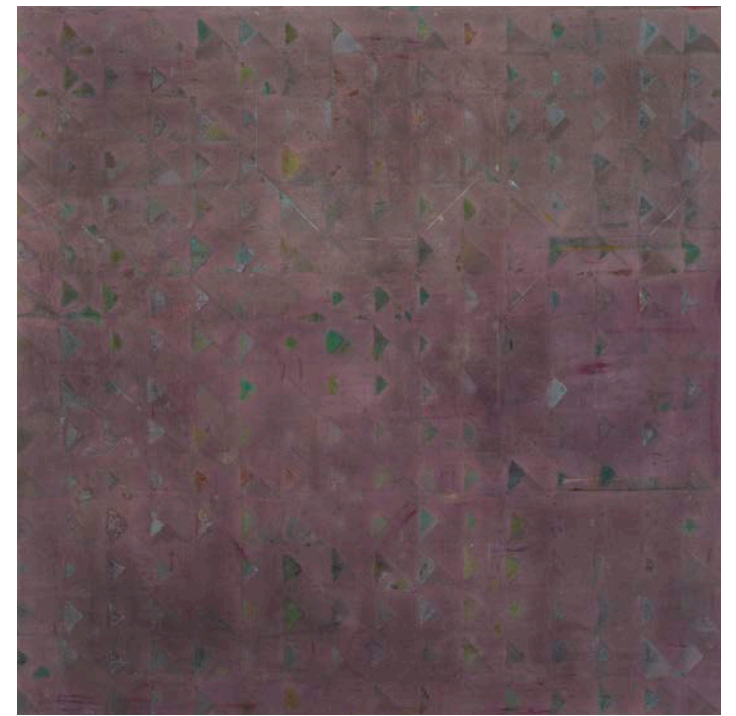
This led to a series of experiments and the development of a technique whereby Gelfman painted triangular grid compositions on one side of a canvas and let the paint seep through to the other side. She devised a way to partly control the amount of absorption that would occur as a way to maintain grid referents while still letting chance intervene in the resulting effects. This became her first set of *thru* paintings. In 2013 she returned to this series, beginning an updated group of paintings, which she continues to pursue currently.



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The recent square *thru* paintings reveal Gelfman's mastery of this technique and the diverse marks it facilitates. These paintings include compositions in which the grid structure is barely visible, with triangles appearing as small, irregular stains, as in *thru 5.4* (2016). The rich purple of this painting is punctuated by blue-green marks whose placement hints at an ordered structure, but one that has been interrupted by the material characteristics of the canvas. Color in these paintings is subtle and complex, as in *thru 3* (2018), which shows an overall blush of light pink interacting with dissolving triangles of blues, each edged in watery greens or purples.

The grids rendered in these paintings feel far from the modernist forms of Mondrian or LeWitt. Their geometries appear less clear or universal in character. Instead the rationality of their structure is portrayed as corroded and changed by time and wear. They embrace external references in a way that goes against high modernism's emphasis on painting's exclusive reference to its own formal characteristics. The triangular pattern Gelfman engages distinctly ties these works to many non-Western textiles and weaving traditions. Gelfman moved to Miami to be

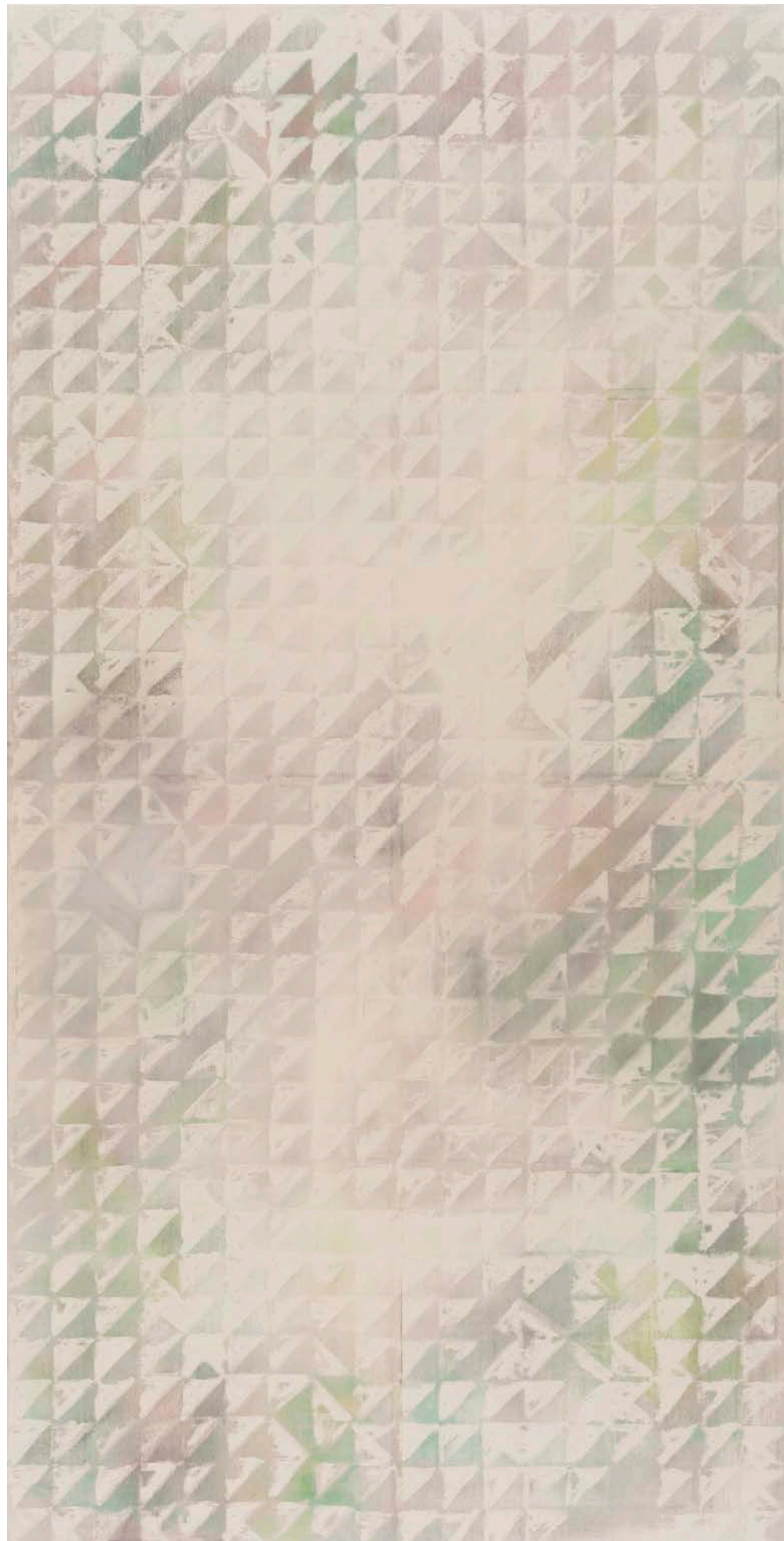


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closer to Bogotá, Colombia, where she and her husband started a flower business. Her long engagement with Colombia has fostered an investigation of the country's indigenous weaving techniques, which has influenced *thru* and several other series. Her specific interests lie in how these techniques use geometry and repetition but also allow for the incorporation of irregularities and subjective alterations within their systematic modes of production.

The corroded and bleached quality of the *thru* paintings specifically speak to the environmental context of Miami and how its heat, sunlight, and salt water interact with its built landscape. These works recall tile floors worn down by the elements or walls deteriorated by humidity, invaded by mold, tropical plants, or flooding. Several paintings from 2018 titled *breath* further these architectural references through their large scale and stele-like formats. Areas of their triangular grids appear washed out to an even greater degree than in the square-format paintings—the compositions come in and out of focus, just barely visible, like how breath can fog glass just briefly before vanishing.

¹ Rosalind E. Krauss, "Grids," in *The Originality of the Avant-garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 12.



Grids taken from Miami's urban architecture inform examples from several series, including the 1998 painting *greil* from *oil and sand*. The curvilinear lines reference the gridded metalwork that covers the windows and doors of the homes in many working-class neighborhoods in Miami, decorative bars that serve as protection. The title of the series refers to the artist's process of producing the work, which involves extensive layering of oil and acrylic paint and then sanding down the paintings' surface to reveal the linear forms embedded within. The resulting paintings mysteriously emphasize both their material and immaterial qualities, with forms coming in and out of legibility. The title *greil* reinforces these references to optical and material play, combining the words "gray" and "veil."

The exhibition also includes two large paintings, *between black 1* (2005) and *between 2* (2008), which are influenced by the artist's work with urban youth at the Barnyard community center in Coconut Grove. In Gelfman's workshops, children have described their particular animosity toward chain-link fencing seen throughout Miami, which they associate with exclusionary tactics and divisions in the city. Gelfman engages this element of urban architecture in compositions that transform metal grids into shifting fields of light and transparency that recall patterns generated by wind on water. *burqa grey* (2000) is a large, horizontal painting that takes its title from Gelfman's interest in the political implications of the burqa, which is often discussed in Western contexts as denigrating or repressive. Yet as she became more engaged with this form, she became less interested in judging its role in

women's liberation. Rather her interests shifted to how it offers an alternate, feminine space, a physically light and somewhat translucent plane that sets up a barrier between masculine and feminine, public and private. Gelfman's attraction to the burqa follows her similar interests in veiling and constructions of presence and absence. In *burqa grey* washes of pale blue-gray paint move over and under darker drips that flow down the painting in irregular, angled patterns, as gravity moved the paint around thicker areas of transparent painting medium, made using a trowel. These darker drips become more visible along the raw canvas of the painting's lower edge, recalling tassels or thick woven threads hanging from fabric.

Several of the formal experiments pursued in *burqa grey* are developed in a more systematic way in the artist's *lines* series from 2007–08. Produced on Masonite panels, these works also present drips of paint moving over, under, and across patterns created using a trowel and painting medium. In this series, however, these vertical zigzag markings are positioned on top of a base of horizontal brushstrokes. Together these linear marks create visible grids, though significantly irregular, transparent, and loose. Textile references are particularly strong with this group of works, as the artist has literally woven together paint of varying viscosities. Her manipulation of painterly effects becomes technically remarkable as, in *lines black*, for example, white vertical drip lines flow and disappear against a darker ground, creating an unusual sense of depth. In *lines silver*, similar effects are achieved with black lines against a translucent taupe-silver ground.



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The 2010 paintings *dune 17* and *dune 18* were produced using metallic and flash paint on panel and display particularly dramatic and mysterious light effects. As the metallic paint catches the light, it obscures the patterning beneath it, creating paintings that encourage the viewer to actively move around them to catch their shifting illumination and markings. The gold of *dune 17* glows brilliantly, momentarily creating a monochrome, with its color evoking ancient ritual uses of gold to catch the light, such as in pre-Hispanic vessels or Spanish Colonial altarpieces. As the light shifts, an organic pattern of white forms appears. It has the repetition of a grid structure while directly recalling the sandy landscapes described in the work's title. Both sand and water are referenced through the painting's play between shifting views of pattern, reflection, and transparency. *dune 18* presents similar effects, but in a subtler manner; a hazy silver interacts with soft vertical and horizontal marks. This painting particularly recalls Japanese aesthetics, such as translucent silks or the metallic paint used on decorative screens. These paintings are carefully positioned to catch the natural light coming in from the large window of the Jerry and Rose Ellen Greene Gallery, linking them to the water landscape visible outside.

This exhibition seeks to articulate how, for Gelfman, grids provide a structure that helps generate subsequent processes of experimentation. The modernist order they reference positions these paintings within an art historical trajectory defined by rigor and austerity, aesthetics characterized by a reductionist purity. Gelfman is attracted to the rules these traditions have established, but sees herself as a trickster, continually playing both with and against them. The repetition that grids and patterning engender takes on a meditative quality for the artist, creating a ritualized process that helps initiate a painting, but also an order that is quickly invaded by chance, material effects, and context, corrupting rational geometries. Her grids dialogue with Krauss's "mythic" description of the form, as they emphasize both her science-like experimentation with the medium's materiality—its surfaces and paint—while concurrently stressing their status as symbols of belief. The paintings gesture toward a spirituality that is not contained in modernist formal aesthetics, but that is informed by the diverse rhythms of the nature and cultures that surround the artist.

Tobia Ostrander
Chief Curator



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Grids: A Selection of Paintings by Lynne Golob Gelfman
September 15, 2018–April 21, 2019

Lynne Golob Gelfman

b. 1944, New York; lives in Miami

Grids: A Selection of Paintings by Lynne Golob Gelfman is organized by PAMM Chief Curator Tobias Ostrander.

Biography

Lynne Golob Gelfman (b. 1944, New York) received a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, Bronxville, New York, and an MFA from the School of the Arts, Columbia University, New York. She taught art at the Dalton School in Manhattan from 1968 to 1972, when she and her husband started a flower farm outside Bogotá and moved to Miami, an import gateway for the flowers. Gelfman's work has been presented in more than 40 solo exhibitions. Her first solo show, in 1974, was the result of a prize awarded by Miami Metropolitan Museum and Art Center, then under the leadership of Arnold Lehman. Gelfman has since presented solo exhibitions at, among others, Marisa Newman Projects, New York; Noguchi Breton, Miami; William Siegal Gallery, Santa Fe; Dimensions Variable, Miami; the Patricia and Phillip Frost Art Museum, Florida International University, Miami;

Alejandra von Hartz Gallery, Miami; Carol Jazzar Gallery, Miami; Fredric Snitzer Gallery, Miami; Newman Popiashvili Gallery, New York; and Suite 106, New York. Her work is in many public and private collections, including Pérez Art Museum Miami; Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami; Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach; Baltimore Museum of Art; and Detroit Institute of Arts. Gelfman has taught art at Florida International University, University of Miami, Miami Dade College, Miami Metropolitan Museum and Art Center, and Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami. For the last 15 years, she has developed art projects with inner-city children at the Barnyard, Coconut Grove.

Images

Cover	<i>thru 3</i> , 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 48 inches	7	<i>thru 3</i> , 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 48 inches
2	<i>circle blue</i> , 1968. Acrylic on canvas. 55 x 55 inches	8	<i>between 2</i> , 2008. Nitro-alkyd paint and acrylic on canvas. 66 x 96 inches
3	<i>thru green 1</i> , 1974. Acrylic on canvas. 60 x 60 inches	9	<i>burqa grey</i> , 2000. Acrylic on canvas. 66 x 96 inches
4	<i>thru 8.3</i> , 2017. Acrylic on linen. 48 x 48 inches	10	<i>lines black</i> , 2008. Acrylic on panel. 66 x 96 inches
5	<i>thru 5.4</i> , 2016. Acrylic on canvas. 48 x 48 inches. Collection of Stephanie Mora and Aramis Gutierrez.	11	<i>lines pink 5</i> , 2007. Acrylic on panel. 48 x 48 inches Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Lisa Austin and Jim Hofford
6	<i>breath 5</i> , 2018. Acrylic on canvas. 108 x 54 inches		

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