

KES ZAPKUS

Paintings and Drawings

# WILLIAM HOLMAN GALLERY

65 LUDLOW STREET, NEW YORK, NY 10002



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William Holman Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Kes Zapkus. This is the first show of his work since a 2014 retrospective at the National Gallery of Art (NDG) in Vilnius, Lithuania. Zapkus' new exhibition in New York draws upon a cross-section of work highlighting plays with polarities spanning the development of his career. An earlier era anchored in the classicizing grid and structure gives way to elements of fluid, organic expression.

Zapkus' paintings leverage abstraction to express the nuances of semiotics and his own propositions on memory, order and perception. The works' titles reflect their content, addressing issues of aesthetics, humanism, and the observed natural world. Through the creation of a cross-disciplinary architecture on the canvas, the paintings in this exhibition bridge visual language with classical music composition. A rational visual structure parallels essential musical components, allowing Zapkus's paintings to capture the vibrancy and logic of beat, tempo and measure. His paintings employ repetition and variation for a dialectic opposition between individual expressions. The creation of a "total work" elevates the viewer's sense of past, present and future by establishing a nonlinear relationship between space, action and time.

– Chip Holman, March 2015

Gallery Hours: Tuesday to Saturday, 10.30 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.

# KES ZAPKUS

## Paintings and Drawings

March 25 to May 9, 2015

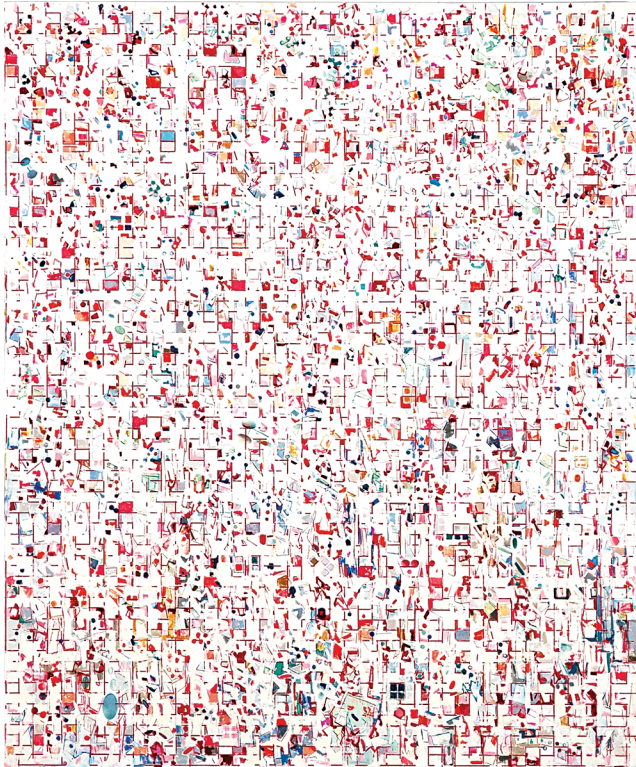
Opening Reception:  
Wednesday, March 25, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m.

### *BEEES AND VINCENT*

is an abstract riff on the hypothetical struggles of Van Gogh in the fields, with the heat of the sun, the winds, and insects, as he applied his cadmium yellows to canvas. The painting suggests unbridled passion and compulsive frenzy in its loopy, linear tangle across the intimate format of the canvas. The verticals and horizontals of the usual grid give way to an organic, pulsating structural device. The loopiness is a network, not unlike a grid in its ability to engage, divide, and entrap space, while giving it structure.

2013, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 48 x 36 inches





### *REDRESS OF JUILLIARD JAZZ*

is the most contrapuntal painting of this group. Active all-over elements are stated, seldom repeated, and then contradicted by variables. I was very excited by several concerts of Anthony Braxton I had attended. His musical structures were so wild and surprising and felt totally improvisational, while extremely complex. When I learned the improvisations were all planned, written down ahead of time, as was Braxton's practice while at Juilliard, I was very appreciative. I enjoy when reasoning is the undercurrent that guides expression to its identity.

This painting is like a fugue in its highly organized rhythmic punctuations and constancy, allowing only a minimal release of tension. The work has an updated, oblique reference to Mondrian's painting *Broadway Boogie Woogie*. Referencing attributes of jazz, the basic crimson and white palette points to the working of cerebral and human lifeblood energies. This is a calculus of nerve endings and emotional response.

2002, Oil on Latex Spray on Cotton, 72 x 60 inches

### *DRIFTING (MENTAL AND CONTINENTAL)*

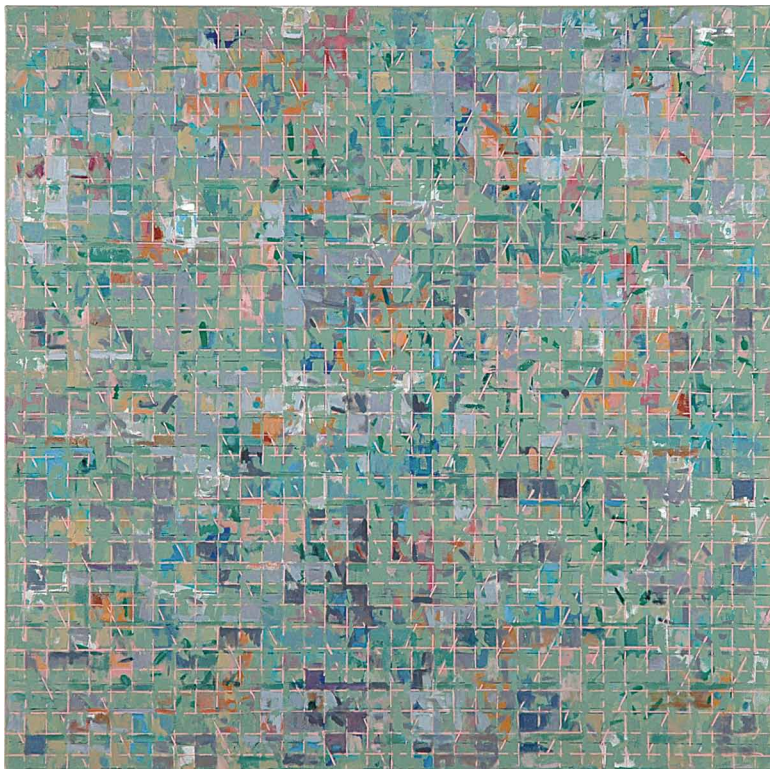
While perusing diagrams of the tectonic plate moves and separation of the earth's land masses, I was amazed by the configurations of the continents and how obviously their contours had previously fit together. The clarity of the continental severance and drift was astounding to me; the continents were as puzzle pieces. Comfortable with chaos theory, a favorite reverie of mine is that all is chaos, and that in chaos, all exists. My wishful thoughts were tempered by obvious proof. I set up a work that whimsically addresses these contradictions.

The painting is a two panel vertical diptych with a three inch separation between. The lower panel shows the recognizable continents, hinting to the corresponding contours between them. The rendering is thematic rather than scientific, the ocean shelf and tectonic movement are shown with hypothetical linear stress points and other painterly embellishments. The upper panel of this diptych is a free form pendant to the lower panel – a scrambling of the fragments of the continents and diagrammatic signs into “a mental mix.” The work represents an accumulative mixing of information, as though one were in a reverie, and hints at the equivocation of all in mental processing.

2005, Oil on Canvas, 75 x 48 inches







### *PASTORAL INTIMATIONS*

is a mottled gray-green painting marked by linear and planar passages in an opposing muted rose. It has several references to a Cezannist attitude of touch and pulsation. The obliques of the grid form a triangular thrust downward, opposite to and yet referential of Mont Sainte Victoire's upward triangulation. The work has the softness of the vegetation and land in a moisture laden atmosphere. The small squares can be seen pictorially as landscape configurations, individually or in groups. In totality, the work is a little fugue of oblique, vertical and horizontal movements of associative landscape references.

2009, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 36 x 36 inches

### *PHANTASM IN THE LAND OF LAKES*

Phantasm in the Land of Lakes gets its tone of abstraction from a visit to Olana - Frederic E. Church's fanciful Persian – Moorish villa situated on a high, wooded hilltop in upstate New York. With vignette views of the waters of the Hudson River Valley and the Catskills, Olana's strange magnificence suggests 19th century fantastical American narratives (both visual and literary). Tales like Washington Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and Poe's ghost stories flood the imagination at this extraordinary site.

The painting is an elongated vertical overview in the dusky greens of distant misty forests. Gaps and openings of blue suggest the presence of water seen through the woodlands. The brushiness of the paint structures the work in painterly passages, rather than by needs of depiction. The verticality of the work suggests height, a view seen from above. This abstract painting refers to a specific New York State landscape. Finally, an angular configuration is superimposed on the front plane of the canvas, floating like a phantasm – a reminder that thought and emotion form our experiences of a physical view.

2011, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 72 x 36 inches





### *LEDGER (SCRAMBLED)*

is a favored “white painting” concept that I’ve often pursued, but with major changes. The ledger theme is represented by a partially obliterated vertical and horizontal grid. I began the piece with a pencil and colored pencil study on paper. The painting has a somewhat graphic orientation for this reason. The scrambling – scribbling overlays and intermixes emulate some of the “drawing” markings. Organic, looping lines and other grid systems are meant to equalize and disorient the forces of the original structural foundation. The goal was to create a shimmering white field with slight spatial inundations and colored passages indicating warming, cooling, and individual pockets of energy within the fluctuating whole. These individual areas retain a sense of autonomy within the woven web of marks.

2014, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 72 x 48 inches



*REHEARSAL (PIAZZOLLA)*

is a small orange-hued field bordered by red and blue side bands, suggesting polarities. The interior elements are linear and somewhat tenuous, enveloped in a "terra rosa" field of heat where ritual movement takes place. The painting suggests a sense of a trial, preview, or rehearsal for major action. In a way, it is a rehearsal for the following two pieces that focus on Astor Piazzolla's music.



2014, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 40 x 30 inches



### *LIBERTANGO (PIAZZOLLA)*

is based on one of the most recognizable and repeated themes by Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla. His *Libertango* suggests freedom and rebelliousness as content. My painting is more of an homage to the piece, rather than an illustration of it. The painting is divided in two distinct areas, which suggest separate temperaments. The upper olive-green is as an area of fluidity and lyricism, while the lower gray section simmers with undercurrents of darker themes: struggle, resistance, and interruption. In this case, the separate moods are variables within the same frame of reference. This work leads to the more encompassing *Piazzolla in Traffic*.

2014, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 72 x 36 inches

### *PIAZZOLLA IN TRAFFIC* (Right)

I'm fascinated by musical structuring – composing. Astor Piazzolla, sanctioned by Nadia Boulanger, was a radical composer positioned between classical and secular pop aesthetics. My painting *Traffic*, 1975 was for me a radical work - a quartet of four abrasively oblique panels, of a secular aesthetic, aiming for resolution in classical aesthetic balance. Here I am joining these two topics (hence the title.) In musical architecture, measure to measure, forward and back, theme and variation, build a whole. *Piazzolla in Traffic* is likewise constructed



of small units making a whole as a sum of the parts. The experience is an inclusive summation of these particular references, discordant yet co-dependent. The elements quoted from *Traffic*, 1975 are joined with spinning individual configurations (as if tango couples) in a modulated, pulsating, gray arena. The work is an ambitious summary of my painterly evolution. It exhibits risk and daring in addressing challenges I would not have been able to undertake previously.

2014, Oil, Acrylic on Cotton, 74 x 144 inches

