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Kes Zapkus (John Weber Gallery, 142 Greene Street): "Collision Course," an immense and eventful painting, immediately collars you and doesn't lose its grip. A dense musical composition of a work, it's essentially an all-over grid whose units are broken open by thousands of small, eccentrically geometric colored shapes, their riotous disorder firmly held in check by the underlying network. Larger, rudimentary forms — circles, part of a wheel shape — occasionally emerge, but the eye quickly pushes them back into the teeming surface. Like difficult but exciting music, the painting forces concentrated attention.

We're made aware, by their titles, that the paintings in this show have a more-than-formal content. "Dreams of Patriotism," a smaller work with larger, more strident elements, for instance, incorporates a map of Northern Ireland. A brilliant drawing, "Fluency Lost for Fervor Gained," also about the troubles in Ulster, depicts in whites, pastels and pencil a strife-ridden field of broken architectural and other fragments, again bound by the restraints of a nearly invisible grid.

Kes Zapkus paints other works in calmer rhythms, all using the vocabulary of small forms challenging the grid. In "Windjammer," for instance, done during a Long Island summer, the grip relaxes; a large white field and less density produces a more tranquil effect. But in "Night Sea" an intense, concentrated field of broken geometrics in deep blues and greens makes us feel the depth of the water. All in all, the performance is virtuoso. (Closes tomorrow.)

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