

GREATER NEW YORK 2010

ZAK PREKOP
b. 1979

Though Zak Prekop approaches painting from a conceptual standpoint, he is dedicated to a formal studio practice: he is concerned with the ideas and elements that structure painting, from the physical stretcher bars to the compositional grid, and how color is laid down and perceived by the human eye. Often working with a monochrome palette of white, black, grey, blue, or red, Prekop's abstract paintings play with opticality and an illusionistic sense of depth—within a single painting, the viewer perceives the painting as both flat and textured.

Prekop further heightens the spatial ambiguity of his paintings by confusing the foregrounds and backgrounds in many of his works. Washes of color are painted directly onto unprimed canvas and are subsequently covered by series of parallel and perpendicular diagonal lines. The intersections of the lines are left unpainted or reveal the color of the underpainting, forming points that establish a grid. Though it is created from the background interactions, the network of points seems to float over the surface of the painting. Since each point varies in size, more accurately trapezoidal forms rather than points, the lattice suggests a handmade, idiosyncratic sensibility, not unlike the decidedly hand-worked lines and grids of Agnes Martin.

In other paintings, such as *Blue Mirror* (2010), a grid-like structure is demarcated in shades of white and blue, created by following the edges of small sheets of paper collaged onto the canvas beneath the paint and the stretcher bars supporting the canvas. Like his conflation of foreground and background in other paintings, the back of *Blue Mirror* informs the front; the physical structure dictates the compositional form. However, such a rigorous compositional system is upset by paintings such as *Incomplete Division (Red)* (2010) in which layers of paint appear to have been peeled off or abraded to reveal the raw canvas beneath, punctuating the grid with voids. Likewise, Prekop does not paint to the very edge of the canvas, creating a visual distance between the paint and its support. The bold red color and loose edges read as a stain with gestural connotations that also counter the geometric structure of the composition. The excised sections create a collage-like quality, generating a sense of speed and improvisation that act as a counterpoint to their carefully built up surfaces.