ALMINE RECH

‘Cell Grids’

Sep 26, 2021 — Feb 13, 2022 | Dallas Contemporary, Dallas, TX

‘CELL GRIDS’, Peter Halley’s first exhibition in Texas in more than fifteen years, presents a unique series of paintings made from 2015 to the present. ‘CELL GRIDS’ showcases a surprising vein of Halley’s work, paintings in which one element of his distinctive iconography—his intensely colored rectilinear “cells”—is isolated and arranged into syncopated grids, bringing his work into dialogue with the structural grid of classic Modernism as represented in the work of Piet Mondrian, Agnes Martin, Andy Warhol and others.

Since the 1980s, Peter Halley’s paintings have blurred the distinction between geometric abstraction and representation. In Halley’s paintings, monochromatic squares become “prisons” and “cells,” while straight lines become the “conduits” connecting them.

The paintings on view in ‘CELL GRIDS’ at Dallas Contemporary are a focused presentation of a new direction in Halley’s work developed over the last six years in which the artist has isolated a single element of his personal iconography, the intensely colored rectilinear “cells,” arranging them into large-scale syncopated grids.

Multiple canvases are bolted together into a tightly packed jigsaw puzzle devoid of atmosphere, while the paintings’ bright, luminous color combines with their rough tactile surfaces to create a palpable tension between attraction and repulsion.

Devoid of Halley’s usual practice of deploying his prisons, cells and conduits in a figure-ground space to create a recognizable narrative, the ‘CELL GRIDS’ paintings tread a subtle line between purist Modernist abstraction and Post-Modern referentiality, creating yet another level of tension and ambiguity.

Shown together at Dallas Contemporary for the first time, this group of eighteen large-scale paintings extends Halley’s ongoing exploration of the language of painting. The exhibition offers a surprising new way of engaging with the artist’s work.