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# Equipoise

13 Nov 2024 — 25 Jan 2025 at Goya Contemporary in Baltimore, United States

20 December 2024



Timothy App, *Equipoise*, exhibition view. Courtesy of Goya Contemporary Gallery

Goya Contemporary Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by abstract geometric painter Timothy App. The exhibition, *Timothy App: Equipoise* will be on view from November 9th, 2024 through January 25th, 2025.

Excerpt from the catalog:

Over the past five decades, contemporary American painter Timothy App (b. 1947, Akron, OH; lives in Baltimore, MD) has developed a substantial body of work that engages in a meticulously disciplined yet nuanced exploration of hard-edge abstract painting. His work contributes meaningfully to the broader art historical discourse surrounding geometric practices. App's distinctive style of linear abstraction, marked by both assertive visual tensions and contemplative subtleties, reflects a profound understanding of the essence of painting, affirming his status as one of the most significant and accomplished living painters in the Washington DC/ Baltimore region.

App's work is characterized by subdued, often muted, earthy tones that confront carefully deployed and precisely delineated, sometimes starkly black and white hard-edge forms, creating unexpected spatial ambiguity that arises from abutted and overlapping shapes. In his early years, App considered becoming an architect, and this discipline still significantly influences his work more than fifty years later. Growing up Catholic and surrounded by the formal rituals of that religion, combined with an abiding interest in the formality of sports like baseball, App established his tendency toward ordered structures early on. While adhering to these rigorous, rule-based constructions, App simultaneously embraced the unknown. It is here that he discovered invention, surprise, wonder, and experimentation. What better way to test his self-imposed rules of aesthetic organization than by working with aqueous paint, a medium that comes with dubious control? And challenge himself, he did. The artist's procedure is straightforward yet often surprising to first-time viewers of his work. App typically creates one or two studies for each painting, then transfers the compositions, often with modifications, onto

stretched and carefully prepared canvases. He tapes out his shapes, making small adjustments along the way, as he often deviates from the original studies. App carefully prepares his palette to achieve a fluidity that makes control challenging; then he begins the process of glazing bolder colors with wide flat brushes to mute them down, layer by layer, building translucent, precisely opposing directional layers that conform to the warp and weft of the canvas. This accumulation not only tones down the hue but also provides a structure of light that affirms the artist's intention. While some areas within a work may feel stark, flat, solid, and opaque, others retain a sense of light that seems to emanate from within, evoking a spiritual quality.

Through his poetic use of paint, App operates with restraint, even as he celebrates the unpredictability of an aqueous medium within the boundaries of a controlled and ordered hand. This confrontation is evident with some of his shapes where the paint pools at the taped edge, highlighting the humanity of the maker while showcasing the handmade quality of the artwork. Many viewers have considered this phenomenon, coupled with the complex special ambiguity, to be the subtly enchanting essence of App's work.

Although App has avoided literal representation in his practice, many works throughout his career metaphorically reference the open space of a window or a stage, the formidable presence of architectural forms, or, in the case of his *Homage* series, created between 2005 and 2019, the distillation of canonical Western artworks into his distinctive abstract, geometric vernacular. With the *Multiform* paintings, which began in the late 1990's and continue to the present, App engages in a set of variables that, like all of his work, "begins with a complex grid that interacts with a selection of elemental forms that are circular, angular, and rectilinear"<sup>1</sup> to arrive ideally at a state of equipoise, or a condition of resolve resulting from a complex interaction of prescribed variables. This condition, according to the artists, "has personal, ethical implications that act as a guide in life. What seems at first to be objective, prescriptive and dispassionate has become, over time, unquestionably and indefatigably personal"<sup>2</sup>.

The artist has a penchant for rarefied titles, often drawn from his voracious reading, as well as from his interest in the etymology of words. These titles are chosen after the painting is completed. They evoke a range of associations, reflecting a scholarly depth that aligns with the artist's masterful understanding of history and the evolution of painting.

**Timothy App** received his Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) in 1970 from Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, followed by a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) in 1974 from the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. He served as Assistant Professor at Pomona College in Claremont, CA, from 1974 to 1978, as Associate Professor of Art at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, NM, from 1978 to 1990, and has been a Professor of Art at the Maryland Institute College of Art in Baltimore, MD, since 1990 until his retirement in 2017. App's accolades include a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship, Individual Artist Grants from the Maryland State Arts Council, the Trustee's Award for Excellence in Teaching at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and a nomination for the Richard C. Diebenkorn Fellowship. Since the 1970s, App's work has been extensively exhibited across the United States, as well as in Poland, Japan and Australia.

App's work is housed in a variety of private, public, and corporate collections, including the AKG Art Museum in Buffalo, NY; the Baltimore Museum of Art in Maryland; the Long Beach Museum of Art in California; the Museum of Fine Arts in Santa Fe, NM; Tamarind Institute in Albuquerque, NM; the Tucson Museum of Art in Arizona; ArtCloud in Seoul, Korea; The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; the Akron Art Museum in Ohio; among many others.

*(Text by Amy Eva Raehse, curator of this exhibition and Executive Director/Partner at Goya Contemporary Gallery)*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Conversation between Timothy App and curator, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation between Timothy App and curator, 2024.