



[Home](#) » [Critique](#)

Richard Gorman 'Kozo' Kerlin Gallery, Dublin 20 January – 25 February 2012

Submitted on March 21, 2012 – 9:09 pm

'Kozo', currently showing in the Kerlin Gallery, comprises a body of work created by Richard Gorman on textured paper, handmade by the artist himself in Japan, after which the show is titled. "Just buying the paper doesn't seem to be enough. I like to give value to the object I'm going to paint."¹

From a visual point of view, there are two distinct parts to the show. Three of the gallery walls are filled with a sequence of 19 works, each featuring a unique combination of coloured shapes. The final wall displays 40 works of equal size, but with a strictly muted and limited palette, which are combined to create one large piece.

Unframed and lightly pinned to the wall, my first impression of these 19 individual works was of a progression of dynamic, coloured shapes, hovering along the perimeter of the space. The palette varies, alternating between strong, bright colours, more muted colours, and the potential in juxtaposing the two. In *Slice Blue*, the more active yellow and orange shapes advance towards the viewer, compared to the more recessive blue and green shapes, creating a sense of balance. Having also previously worked in oil, Gorman's use of gouache here adds a richness and weight to the coloured shapes.

Within the boundaries of the paper, these shapes overlap into a series of singular compositions. *K Flick* fans out like a rather fantastical pack of cards, while in *Slice Blue* a green ball squeezes against a blue capsule shape which is partly covered by a yellow half-capsule, all contained within an orange background. Intricate in arrangement, portraying Gorman's sense of spatial and compositional awareness, a number of works also exude a certain playfulness. There is no apparent pattern to the sequence of images, which become an experiment in the limitless potential combinations.

In some of the works, upon closer inspection, the under-drawings become visible, and it is interesting to note that the coloured blocks do not always adhere to the preliminary drawing; perhaps a first layer has been covered over by a later one so that none of the colour remains, only a suggestion of the shape. Regimented as they may seem, it becomes apparent that the process is still organic and that the works may not always have been fully imagined before

Gorman began working on them. The unique combinations of geometric shapes – both curvilinear and angular – ensure distinct overall contours in each work. In *Lime Lean*, an almost traditional 'X' made of capsule shapes is thrown off balance by a more angular shape imposed on top, creating an asymmetrical contour and slight visual imbalance.

This approach recurs throughout the sequence, where the ends of shapes are unexpectedly chopped off, leaving a hard edge. The negative space created between the bold shapes and the boundary of the paper effectively assumes almost

equal importance, becoming a secondary shape in itself, and momentarily allowing the coloured shapes to emerge as more three-dimensional forms.

At first, All Wall – created by pouring dyed paper pulp into moulds and onto freshly made wet paper – seems somewhat at odds with the rest of the show, perhaps a little overpowering after the intimate close up viewing of the smaller pieces. However, on closer reflection, the maze-like effect of the combined works becomes equally engaging as the eye is drawn to the white spaces between the shapes, trying to find a logical route through them, and invariably reaching an impasse. This alternative way of considering the spatial dimension between shape and paper's edge opens a dialogue between All Wall and the gouaches.

Contemporary Irish art is not without its abstract painters. While the work and surrounding literature of many artists still evoke the subtle influence of, for example, landscapes – Sean Scully and Felim Egan, amongst others – Gorman's works are distinctly non-objective, existing in their own reality. Released from relating to anything else, the works become purely a celebration of expression through the fundamentals of colour, line, and shape in the space they inhabit.

'Kozo' offers the viewer a visual treat. The sequence of gouaches displays a consistency in approach but without repetition. Each work merits close inspection regarding its particular compositional attributes, while the handmade paper is itself an important feature of the show, culminating in the prominent All Wall. The visual elements and their compositional arrangements are the subject of the show, and we need not look beyond them, but merely enjoy them for exactly what they are.

Róisín Russell

lives and works in Dublin. She has worked in Talbot Gallery & Studios and the Oisín Gallery, as well as having curated independently, and currently manages 9 Bond Street Photographic Studios. Her writing has featured in Paper Visual Art Journal and Circa online.

Notes

1.C Dwyer, 'The Art of reinvention', The independent, 15 January 2012