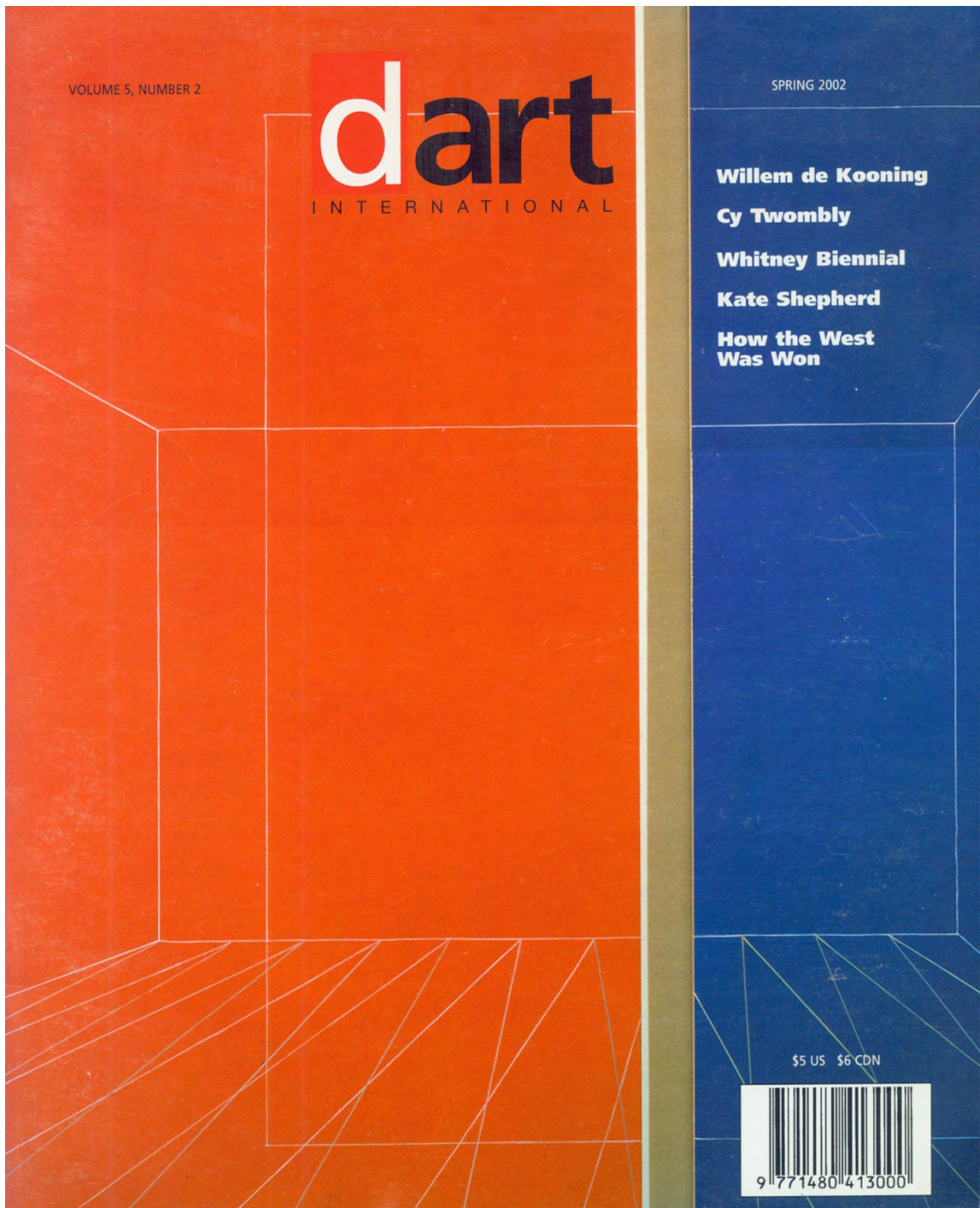


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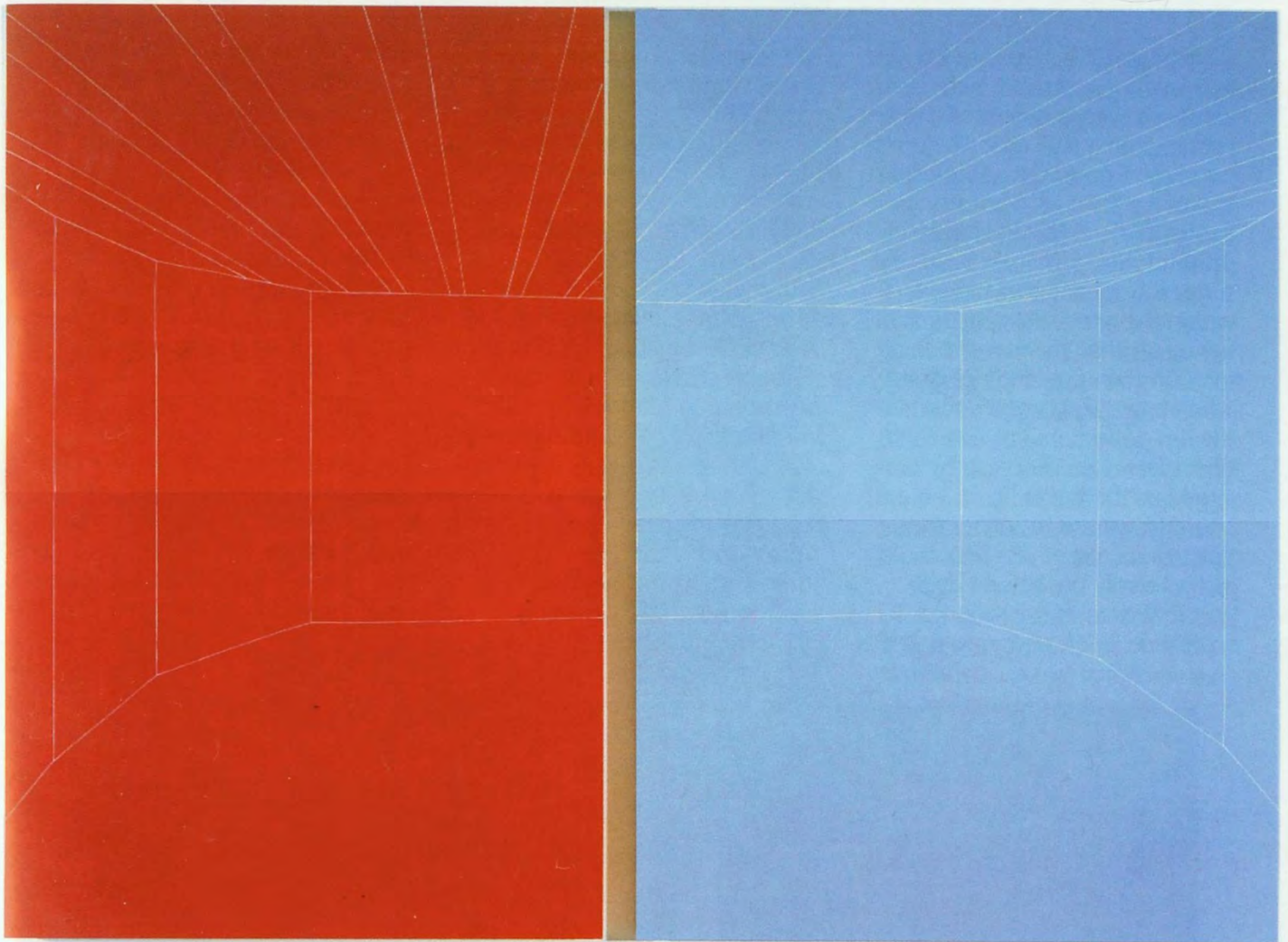
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**Review**  
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**By: Dominique Nahas**







## Paintings

**Kate Shepherd at Galerie Lelong**

**by Dominique Nahas**

In Kate Shepherd's first full-scale exhibition at Galerie Lelong, her enamel on wood panel paintings seem to glow and hover in space with delicacy and precision, qualities that have become her trademark. This show is impressive because of the artist's unusual clarity as she combines volumetric references with modernist architecture's universal space using a strongly reductive and geometric sensibility. Her method elevates

the work, placing it outside its prosaic source material. This is work that carefully melds oppositions: a groundedness in recognizable reality (like doorways and floor and ceiling plans) with the near transcendent, diffused light that permeates each painting.

Several things about Shepherd's work are notably satisfying. In her diptychs, it is the way she resourcefully combines deft line work with implacably serene yet

surprising color combinations. Within other works, it is the way she allows the eye to coolly circumnavigate the structured spaces while implicating the space of the gallery in which they are presented. This pictorial sensitivity and self-reference is playful and suggests hidden spaces or imaginative areas not visible to the eye's mind, merely sensed through absence. In her diptych *Grey and Chocolate, Map and*

*Kate Shepherd, Face the Stage, Coral Red Powder Blue, Radiant Floor, 2002, enamel on wood, A: 40 x 26"; B: 40 x 28"*



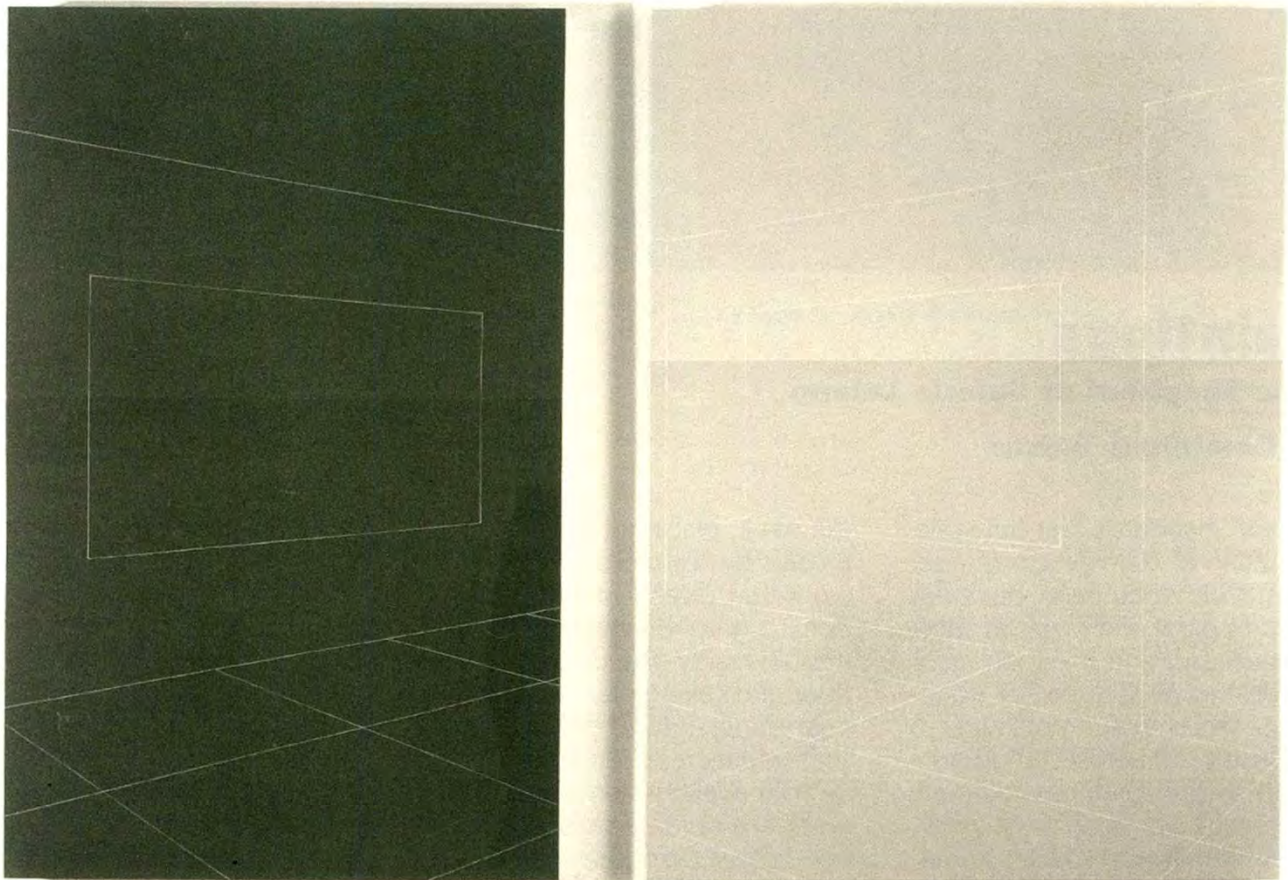
*Blackboard, Tiled Floor*, 2001, for example, one enters a perspectival space with a diminishing point centered on a wall space between two wood panels. A sense of dislocation is intimated as strongly as is a feeling for a localized sense of place. There is room for suggestibility and nuance even within the anecdotal, circumstantial traces that she leaves behind through the application of ghostly white lines. The center square in the left-hand panel of *Grey and Chocolate...* surely could be construed as the lower lip of a blackboard (if we are to follow the title's clues). Yet that form could just as easily be viewed as a window, screen, or modular sculpture. Such perceptual and

architectural ambiguity is at the heart of this work's staying power.

A more gently labyrinthine suggestion of interlocking space is evoked in *Olive and Pale Grey, View to the Next Room Through Wide Doorway, Assorted Molding*, 2001. Here, the eye enters a space that recalls Vermeer's sensitive unfolding of spatial recesses, where rooms are receiving stations for clues to other rooms beyond the eye's reach. Shepherd's work is highly nuanced. As befits the associations one can see between the artist's work and Agnes Martin's, Shepherd's near-illustrative lines are drawn with a quavering intensity that is perfectly awk-

ward and gently uneven. This sense of contingency gives an intimacy to the work and rescues it from seeming perfunctory, prim, or overly decorous. The transitory sensations that linger in the mind and eye are intriguing.

The viewer is compelled to approach the work closely to view the critical, low-key, expressive details of the handwork. In this respect Shepherd's work reminds me of Stephen Westfall's carefully wrought gridded disjunctures, since they also must be seen up close to be appreciated. Kate Shepherd's luminous exhibition at Lelong is sophisticated and intense, a rare treat for the city's many devotees of painting.



Kate Shepherd, *Grey and Chocolate, Map and Blackboard, Tiled Floor*, 2001, enamel on panel, A: 32-1/2 x 24"; B: 33-1/2 x 21"