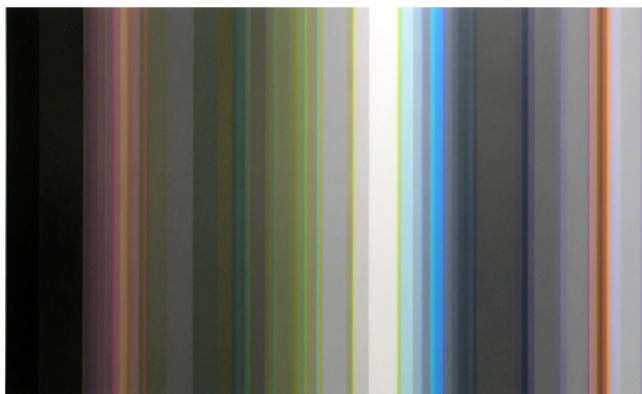


Art in America



Kathryn Refi: *Color Recordings, Day 3, 2006*, oil on panel, 61 by 100 inches; at Solomon Projects.

ATLANTA

Kathryn Refi at Solomon Projects

Perhaps it's not far for an artist to move—from gray scale to muted, dark color. But in Kathryn Refi's self-reflective work, it is a seismic shift. Up to now, her personal history has been distilled in a series of alternately detailed and reductive graphs, models and maps in black, white and gray. The new "Color Recordings" (2005-06) continue the artist's autobiography in gray, taupe, black, olive green, midnight blue and rose. Each of the seven wall-sized oil paintings in her first solo exhibition at Solomon Projects is composed of vertical stripes that represent the frequency and duration of the dominant hues in her daily life.

What ends up as minimalist linear abstraction begins as human experience. To define the color patterns, Refi created a first-person real-world video by way of a tiny personal surveillance camera. Her third eye was embedded in a baseball cap she wore every waking minute of one week. A wall-mounted monitor at the gallery entrance shared silent footage of her motion-filled observations. When she is outdoors, the imprints are gray skies, a blue tarp not far from a

blue mailbox, a blue truck with red taillights parked on a tarpatched street, her brown brick house and its gray picket fence, the reflection of her red T-shirt in a window, and a pink umbrella against the deep greens of a woodland park. Inside, the view takes in blue-tinted rooms, a brown dog with a white paw, a lavender box on a dressing table and the silver cement floor edging a gray flowered rug.

The paintings are titled as seven numbered days. A customized computer program organized her color encounters into 729 hues. From printouts of that data, the artist established a minimum color presence (.125 percent per day) for inclusion, and then figured out how much of each color to paint.

In a formalist sense, these calculations mean everything and nothing. Refi allows us into her head and, in the process, humanizes abstraction. At the same time, she subtracts the personal from the outcome. Details of the artist's restless perspective dissolve into a cool and distant gaze. Nuanced colors play across each canvas, alluding to a curtained room, a dark hall or a doorway into deep space. Beyond that, any allusion to real life slips quietly between the lines of her "Color Recordings."

—Cathy Byrd