

CHEIM & READ

# Art in America

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## Richmond Burton at Cheim & Read

In *Pleace* (2004), one of the signature oil-on-canvas abstractions in Richmond Burton's fourth exhibition at Cheim & Read, the painter again demonstrates his skill at eliciting a nearly limitless set of associations while conferring what appears to be casual intensity on the work. The painting's tripartite sectioning is camouflaged by the feverish activity of the gridded and cellular formations that seem to push out of the canvas. Although *Pleace's* large horizontal expanse (it is 6 by 9 feet) suggests a landscape-ish disposition, the field is consistently interrupted and disrupted by the flurry of reiterated line and color work, all of which makes this grid painting most unruly, yet sensual. The outward push of inexact geometry is matched by an equally insistent sensation of upward thrust, as if a wave of infinitesimal marks and colors of competing intensities were about to engulf you.

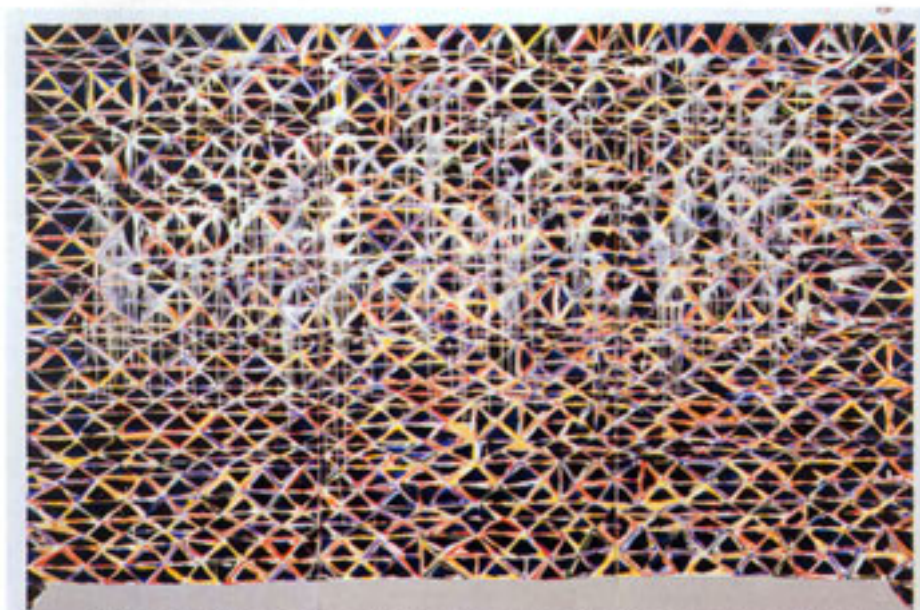
The painting's towering quality is enhanced by the silvery trapezoidal area found at the bottom. (This new device is also used in *Nomad*, 2003, *What's Up*, 2004, *Shazam*, 2004, and *Ting*, 2004, and calls to mind artists such as Kate Shepherd who investigate

the interplay between patterns and linear renderings as suggestive of social space.) This area—the closest to the feet of the viewer—may allude to a floor, vestigial stage set, viewing platform or liminal meeting ground. The silver zone's quietude is met by the painterly fierceness that occurs above it. Drizzling skeins of silver paint (evoking the work of Pat Steir) enhance the sensation of interlocked repetition engaged with flowing incoherence, and further energizes a painting already in hyperdrive.

In the small back gallery, the errant arabesque forms and sketchlike paint handling of *Freak*

*Out* (2004) embodied Burton's intentions, expressed in a notebook in 1999, to "give structure to structurelessness/form to formlessness." Three paintings installed in the front gallery, dependant as they are on the Burtonian syntax, which encourages a clash between implacable repetition and distortion, containment and release, looked forthrightly biomorphic and languorous in character. The blossomlike shapes in *Unflower* and *Solex* (both 2003) seem to swell toward the sky, while the winged form in *Idoasis* (2004) appears caught in glare during an interrupted night flight.

—Dominique Nahas



Richmond Burton: *Pleace*, 2004, oil on canvas, 6 by 9 feet; at Cheim & Read.