



Q&A: Nancy White with Evan J. Garza

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Last featured in edition #85 of *New American Paintings*, **Nancy White** produces intimately-scaled and optically charged geometric abstractions that invite viewers to question their dimensionality, where the distinction between what is painted and what is seen is often elusive. Through the manipulation of basic concrete elements like light and form, White's work — although small — make a big impact. We caught up with the artist this week to discuss her work and her new pieces made on steel. — *EJG*

EJG: What's going on in your studio right now? Tell me about your new work.

I am pushing the relationship between my works on paper and my works on steel — being true to the material and visual differences between these pieces, yet conscious of their interpenetrating aesthetic qualities. Earlier this year I scaled the works on paper from a range of 8 - 12 inches down to 4-8 inches, closer to the proportions of the steel works. I toned down their color contrasts and immediately a different and more direct conversation between the two bodies of work appeared.

In the steel pieces my brushwork is becoming more prominent. Surprisingly, and kind of counter-intuitively, this is making the steel appear to be paper. What is happening overall is that although the pieces are hard-edged — the outer edges of the steel, the geometric forms of the work on paper — their appearance is becoming one of softness. Beyond being perceptually and perspectively uncertain, they are visually contradicting themselves.

EJG: There's a very intimate nature about your work. What is it about making small works that you find interesting?

Some people equate my small scale with precision - that the one is necessary for the other. This isn't my reason for the scale nor is my process entirely precise. My intention is to bring the viewer in — to engage them in becoming conscious of themselves seeing. If you have to walk up close to see something you are questioning and considering



#39, 2010 / Acrylic on hand-tinted paper, 5 x 6.9 inches



#8 Md Bl Gy, 2010 / Oil on primed steel, 5.5 x 8.25 x 1.5 inches

what is there. The small scale brings attention to seeing as opposed to a physical reaction of the body to the work. On a larger scale the work would probably force the viewer to step back, entirely changing the effect. In my work making the eye center to perception is key. And while individually each work is small, installed they occupy a fairly large space.

EJG: What sort of formal decisions go into constructing your geometric abstractions?

I am very engaged with formal issues — the quality of my paper, line, color and shape, the relationship of the flat paper to the three-dimensional steel form etc. In my compositions on paper I am attentive to how something appears and disappears both because of its color as well as its juxtaposition to another shape. In the steel work, I consider how the piece can appear to be three-dimensional and simultaneously flat, how the tilting of a plane skews a color. I like the sharpness of the straight lines and the singularity, diversity and relativity of color. But in the end there is more than just the formal aspects —they have to add up to something new.

EJG: What shows/projects do you have lined up in the near future?

This month I was included in a show called *M5* at the [Portland Northwest College of Art](#). In October my work will be in a group show called *TOUCH* at [ParisConcret](#), Paris, and in December I will be in a show at the [Los Gatos Museum of Art](#), Los Gatos, CA. My second one-person show at [Jancar Jones Gallery](#) in San Francisco will be in February of 2011.



#43, 2010 / Acrylic on hand-tinted paper, 6.13 x 6.69 inches



#37, 2010 / Acrylic on hand-tinted paper, 4.5 x 7 inches