

# ARTFORUM

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## TED KINCAID

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BARRY WHISTLER GALLERY

The permutations of color and image in Ted Kincaid's photogravures raise, and politely refuse to answer, some heavy questions about modernist seriality and the identity of an individual artwork I'd be tempted to say that Kincaid's works calculate a post-Warholian logic of pluralized identities and sameness beneath their surfaces, except that it's nearly impossible to think that there is anything behind the ink on the paper: Like shadows, the gravures live only on the surface, which is appropriate given the light-based chemistry of the photo-intaglio process.

And although photographic and printing technologies are commonly associated with multiples, each of the twenty-eight gravures recently on view (all *Untitled*, 1999 or 2000) was unique, if closely related to the rest in iconography and format. The photogravure technique contributes to a certain old-fashioned flavor, but the abstract design and sleek spareness of Kincaid's images are entirely of this moment. The ovals, grids, and stripes are typically produced on a computer, photographed, and printed as gravures, often on collaged paper in a process called chine colle. The results are elegant, out-of-focus hybrids, both paintinglike and photographic, hovering somewhere between Gerhard Richter's puzzles of representation and the antique Pictorialist photography of Edward Steichen. Kincaid used only six plates to print all the works, varying the colors of ink and/or chine colle tissues with each imprint. A set of horizontal bands, for example, was printed in some instances as a positive with dark ink on a light ground and in other versions as a negative with the relative values reversed. And the same scalloped grid--looking like a hazy coffered ceiling or egg-crate packing material--appeared in pink, aqua, red, and yellow.



*Untitled*, unique photogravure monoprint with chine colle, 23" x 19.5"

Along with the gravures and two large black-and-white photographs, Kincaid showed a suite of twelve small Etch-a-Sketch--like pieces (all *Untitled*, 2000) produced using a photosensitive watercolor process: treating a monochromed sheet of paper with a light-sensitive resist, which when exposed to sunlight will protect the color from washing off. He exposed these under transparencies printed with simple digital drawings of interlocking rectangles or ovals made with a child's "paint" program, yielding quasi-Constructivist "shadows" in the bright fields of color. As understated as the photogravures, the watercolors have a more immediate, linear quality that makes them seem less photographic.

Still, any of photography's indexical factualness that remains in the blurry, nonobjective gravures lingers only as a vague aura of the technology that produced them. One can see that they are derived from photos but also that they are distant cousins of the source image. For Kincaid, the camera is just a tool; if the feel of the photograph endures, it is merely as a sort of material memory of the process. The gravures may be mediated and aloof, but they are squarely situated within the tradition of painting.