

Oberkirch and Berlin, but his art participates in a dialogue with modern American artists.

It is not hard to relate Schmidt to Color Field painters, although the categorization doesn't do full justice to the subtlety of his effects. Schmidt's color is laid down carefully, with an eye toward creating a translucent surface, so that the compositions seem nearly to glow from within. Often, he covers a broad area with a single color and enlivens the painting with small patches of a different hue. Sometimes, as in *2-2002*, a large two-panel work, the smaller color areas brilliantly contrast with the dominant hue; it is possible to see a lilac blue peeking out on the bottom edge and corners, emerging from under the deep red that covers most of the painting's upper half, while the dulled green of the lower panel is quickened with a thin band of yellow along the bottom edge and a bit of red along the upper left edge. These mere traces work their effects. The painting is a poetic exercise in giving color enough weight to stand alone, without the support of delineated forms.

In *15-2001 (Berlin 7.9.01)*, one sees a strikingly graphic red stripe that cuts across a large rectangle of black in the middle of a mostly sea-green ground. In Schmidt's intuitive method, sharply contrasting colors are animated by contradiction, which adds urgency to his paintings. In *Z4-2 (Berlin 2001)*, an undulating, voluptuous black form rises up into a sea of red. The black shape, more or less female in its curves, is articulat-

ed from within by a cagelike structure, apparently in chalk. The red ground accentuates the form by closely following its slow bends. —Jonathan Goodman

### Paul Feeley at Matthew Marks and Lawrence Markey

In the early 1960s Paul Feeley, like his contemporaries Morris Louis and Kenneth Noland, sought to develop a form of painting that would supplant Abstract Expressionism's tactile brushstrokes and dynamic surfaces with a purely "optical" experience of raw canvas stained with liquefied oil-based enamel paints. Yet in their quirky pictorial organization and use of punchy, whimsical shapes, Feeley's compositions are not easily contained within the compass of Color Field painting. Two concurrent exhibitions of paintings, watercolors and sculptures from 1962-65 allowed a reconsideration of Feeley's work, which has been rarely exhibited since a posthumous retrospective at the Guggenheim Museum in 1968.

In *Carthage* (1962), a central squarish blue motif with swelling protuberances is surrounded by linked, toothlike red shapes that constitute not so much a background as an opposing force muscling in. As in other early paintings, the disposition of peculiar shapes, each seemingly organic, results in a quasi-systemic organization of the canvas, in this case as a nine-cell grid.

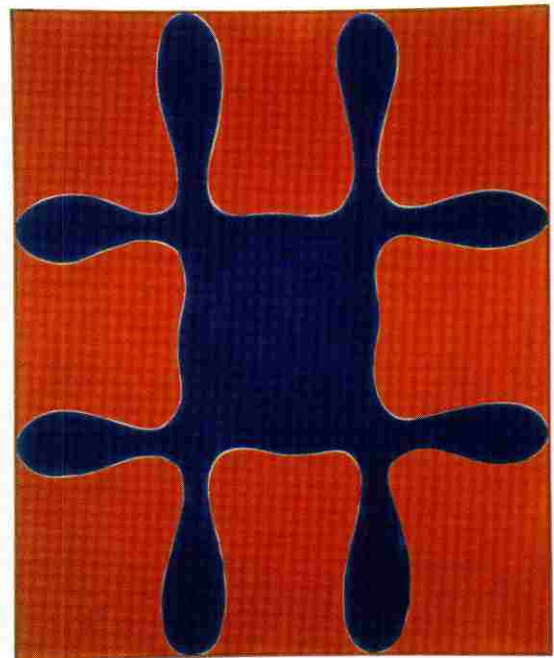
In subsequent compositions, such motifs are regularized as

enclosing, near-rectangular loops or bulbous diamonds, all with curvy convex sides. The surrounding areas are usually left unpainted but are nevertheless endowed with a density and presence. In *Alphard* (1964), for example, there is a finely calibrated tension among four blue cloverlike shapes, as if they were held in their diamond configuration by the four-pronged would-be negative space the arrangement creates. In *Alphrik* (1964), four of these clovers, in burnt-orange outlined in green, are arrayed on the canvas like butterfly specimens, each identical to the other, in a state of taut suspension.

While the titles of many works from this period imply classical or astronomical sources, their colors—bright, basic and suggestive of then-contemporary decor and design—create a snappy, zingy impression largely unknown in the sober post-painterly abstract work of Feeley's peers (though akin to the spirit of Pop). Feeley later translated these shapes into large intersecting painted-wood panels to create toylike free-standing sculptures.

Some of the later works reduce the pictorial vocabulary to a few familiar, if not quite identifiable, figures evoking children's jacks, bowling pins, amphorae and barbells. Feeley deployed these devices across largely unpainted canvases as if they were ornamental elements, often configuring them like highly stylized flowers. Indeed, the repeated pattern of the small aqua lightbulb shapes of *Untitled (March 2)* and of the narrow blue baluster forms and yellow nipped spheres in *Alkaturops* (both 1964) suggest an adaptation of Moorish and Persian decorative arts. If in the earlier paintings formal considerations, particularly an emphasis on pictorial flatness, predominate, in these beautiful canvases, minimally punctuated by pared-down figures, lightness and openness reign.

—Jonathan Gilmore



Paul Feeley: *Carthage*, 1962, oil-based enamel on canvas, 80 1/2 by 64 1/2 inches; at Lawrence Markey.

### Chris Gallagher at McKenzie

British-born, New York-based painter Chris Gallagher makes fields of colorful, hand-painted stripes of varying widths, laid down edge to edge. It is interesting to note that the optically intricate patterns do not necessarily reduce to pure abstraction. Gallagher's paintings can suggest multiple, simultaneous readings: they may remind the viewer of the rings of dust around planets, or imply streams of information reduced to linear codes, or evoke the chromatic harmonies of a particularly stunning sunset.

But any interpretation follows the sensuous experience of the paintings themselves. They begin as strikingly decorative statements, but then move beyond, toward a language of consummate painterly expression. The orientation of the stripes may be vertical, horizontal or concentrically curved; the many-hued striations slightly overlap each other and cause the sometimes thin, sometimes thick layers of paint to seemingly vibrate. In *Voyage* (2002), the thin bands are mostly blue, with some yellow-accented passages. The stripes curve across the width of the painting, which seems both very slow and very fast—slow in its still design, fast in its visual effect.

Gallagher sees his paintings as meditative. The sense of

Werner Schmidt: *6/2001 (22 10 01)*, 2001, water-based paint on cardboard on wood, 40 by 46 inches; at Howard Scott.



