



Kate Shepherd at the Lannan Foundation - Brief Article

[Art in America](#), Jan, 2000 by [Sarah S. King](#)

Kate Shepherd, a New York-based painter and sculptor who recently inaugurated the Lannan Foundation's artist-in-residence program in Santa Fe, concluded her stay with an exhibition of new spare geometric oil paintings, screen prints with graphite tracings and a wall painting. In addition to occupying the foundation's gallery space, Shepherd's works were elegantly installed in an adjacent conference room and the building's entrance hall. The wall painting—a large white rectangle superimposed on the cream-colored walls of the entrance hall—reverberated like a shard of sunlight streaming through a windowpane. This piece was a powerful precursor to the exercises in luminosity and color to be seen inside.

In a departure from Shepherd's earlier figurative imagery, these recent works present empty containers such as boxes or trays drawn in rudimentary outline form over paired blocks of color. In each pair, the blocks are of unequal size and are painted in different shades of a single color. The contrast in tonalities can be subtle or harsh, suggesting the intensities of scorching sunlight or of diminishing daylight.

Many of the oil paintings are diptychs with pronounced dividing seams that often disrupt the depicted volumetric shapes. In addition, the linear elements sometimes run slightly askew as they move from panel to panel. In the screen prints, the box forms frequently appear to have been cut up and imperfectly collaged back together. These intentional imperfections project an expressive awkwardness and a sense of fragility that seem to undermine the works' austerity.

In the painting *Standing Flower Box on Two Reds, Slight Bend Forward, Line Overlap*, a rich, dark red rectangular panel sits above a more crimson one of slightly larger proportions. White threadlike lines delineate a rectangular container standing on its end. At the juncture of the two panels, the lines bend slightly so that the upper portion of the box appears to lean to the right. The horizontal box in another painting, *Apple Greens*, is traced across a yellowish green panel and a larger deeper green one. This box's contours are also unevenly matched and fit together like warped pieces of a jigsaw puzzle.

Shepherd's three-dimensional containers suspended against essentially monochromatic backgrounds evoke Minimalist art of the 1960s, in particular, the sculptures of Anne Truitt, Sol LeWitt and Donald Judd. However, Shepherd's imperfect illustrations of objects from everyday life deliberately dilute Minimalism's visual idealism and anonymous esthetic. The result is a blend of geometric coolness and distinctly poetic effects.