
September 22, 2014

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Gabrielle Selz [Become a fan](#)

Author, Art Writer

• [Email](#)

Richmond Burton: Variations on a Theme

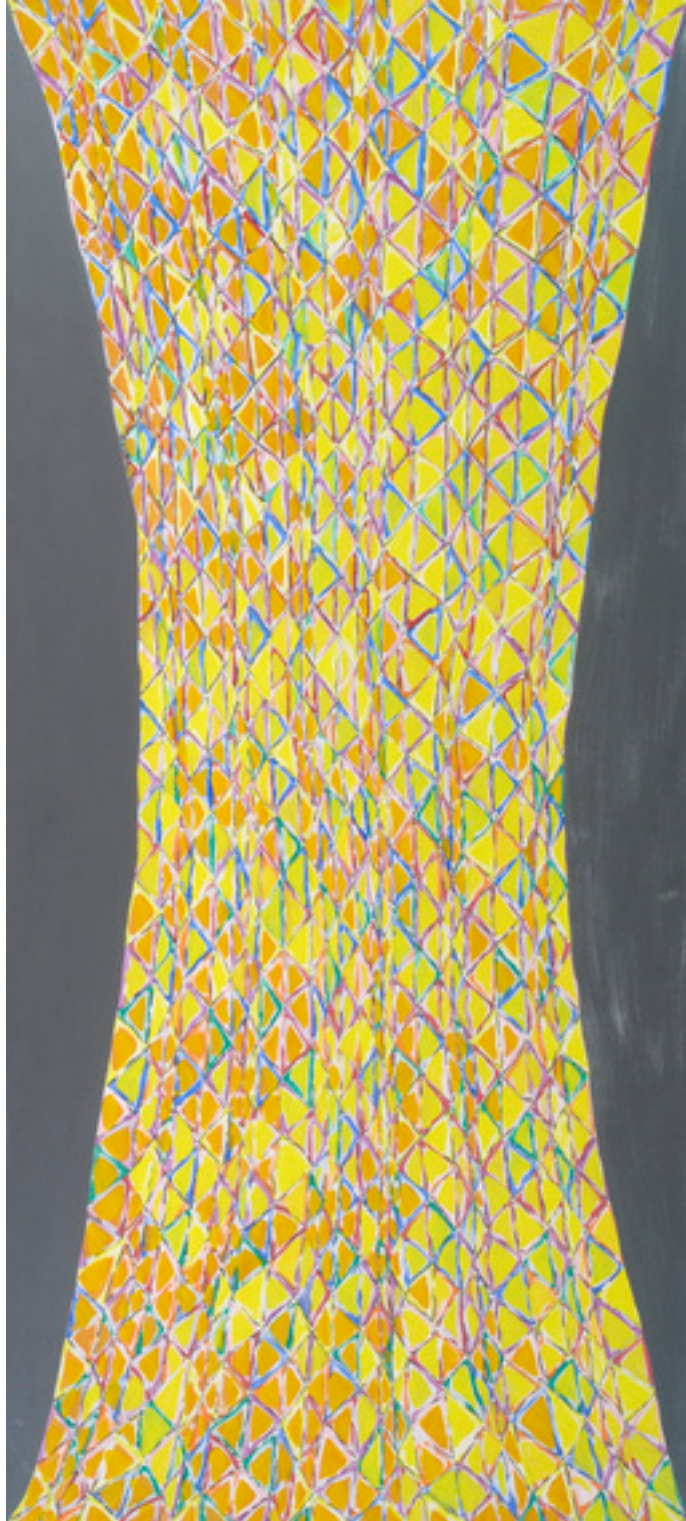
Posted: 07/22/2014 11:51 am EDT Updated: 09/21/2014 5:59 am EDT

Any form of understanding -- whether musical, language based or visual -- is built on a foundation of repetition. Repetition concentrates the mind. But it is variation -- alteration -- that enlivens our consciousness and activates our imagination.

From the beginning, abstract painter, [Richmond Burton](#), whose solo exhibition of recent work curated by Jess Frost is on view at [Silas Marder Gallery](#) in Bridgehampton until August 12th, has sought to investigate variation through the process of reoccurrence.

Since the late 1980s, when he burst onto the New York scene with his dense, black concentric arc paintings that nodded to [Frank Stella's seminal black-stripes](#) from two decades earlier, Burton melded highly controlled compositions with his own unique vocabulary of pattern making. The black soon gave way to tangled webs and dazzling labyrinths bursting with improvisations of color. Much like jazz, Burton creates off a basic arrangement, a rhythm that he endlessly explores and expounds on.

Burton trained as an architect, and grid-like structures anchor his paintings. But these grids are only the scaffolding. Rich hues of color, like cells of layered paint, warp, twist and dance across the canvases. For Burton, color and light contort form and shape space. For it is the composition of space, the particles, atoms and elements that constitute the invisible expanse around us that Burton's work is ultimately discovering.



Stretch Painting Yellow, 2008. Oil on wood panel. 80x36 in.

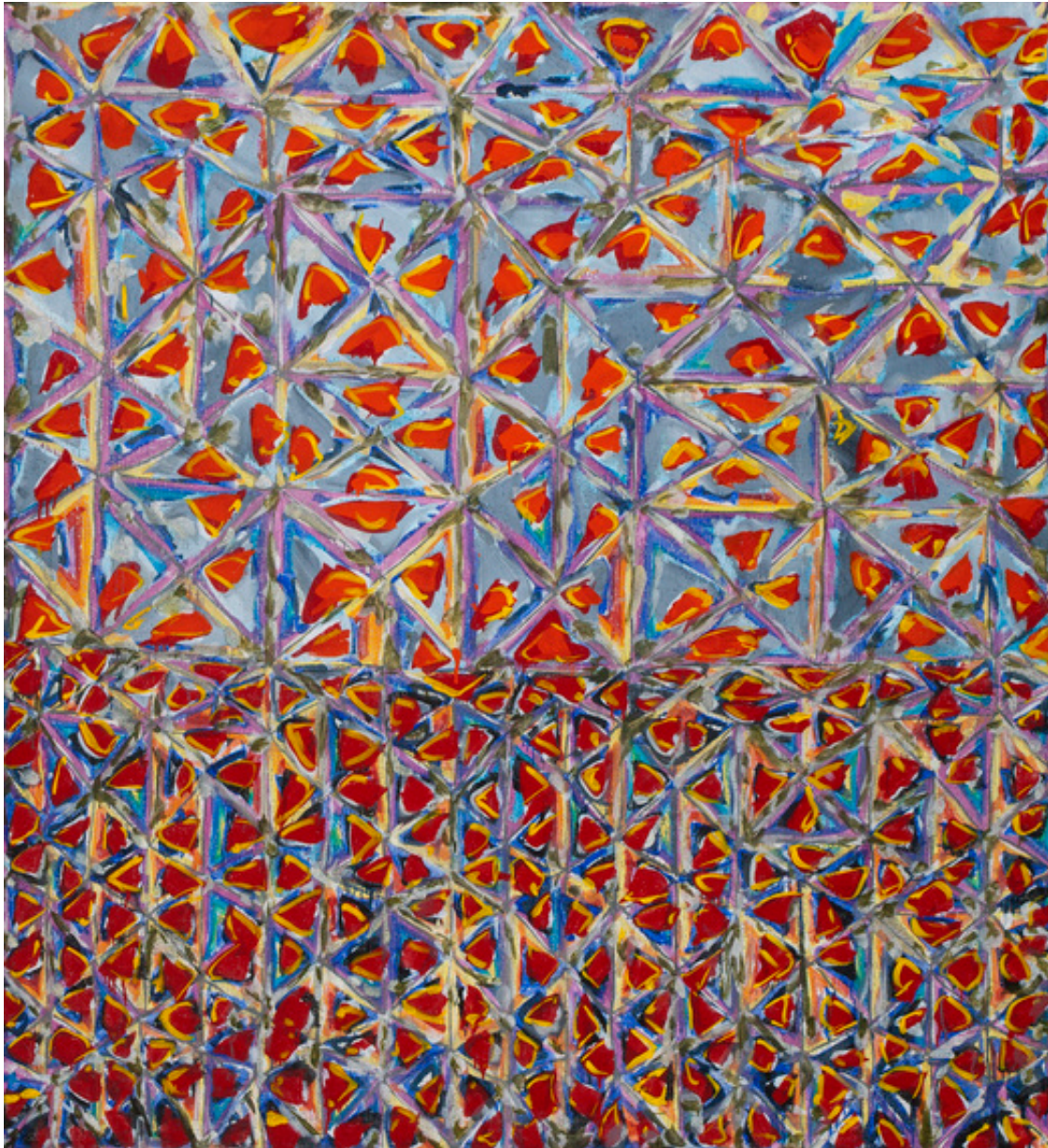
Like gathered nets and cobwebs that catch the light, the paintings in Burton's Stretch series are shaped columns of color that reach the length of the canvas. Meshes set against dark backgrounds that contain collections of luscious mosaic patterns as sensuous as the Byzantine ornamentation in a [Gustav Klimt](#) painting.

Upstairs at *Silas Marder* is *Elevator*, the large showpiece of the exhibition: A blue shaft covered with a red diamond grill gate that sits on a flat grey wedge. This grey wedge forms a metallic platform that juts into the bottom of the painting creating a threshold; a space the viewer can figuratively enter.



Elevator, 2011. Oil on linen. 90x72 in.

Similar to the process of evolution, Burton explores each series until gradually it gives way to a new development. So from the "step" paintings, with their grey doorsteps of access, he has recently evolved to images of open horizons. Inspired by the flat landscape of Los Angeles, with its low buildings in the open bowl of the valley, these densely patterned rectangles of colored fields bring to mind the geometric square constructions of Mark Rothko combined with the richness of Gustav Klimt's designs.



Horizon Window-Orange and Red, 2012. Oil on linen. 48x44 in.

Burton's paintings have a grandness that reaches beyond visual splendor. In the newest work, drips of color ooze free of imposed order, like vines breaking through

and overtaking a palace. One wonders where Burton is going next. And what will the variation on his theme lead him to reveal.

All images curtesy of Silas Marder Gallery and Richmond Burton

Silas Marder Gallery is located 120 Snake Hollow Road, Bridgehampton.

(631) 702-2306. info@silasmarder.com

Follow Gabrielle Selz on Twitter: www.twitter.com/GabrielleSelz

MORE:

[Richmond Burton](#)[Mark Rothko](#)[Gustav Klimt](#)[Silas Marder](#)[Landscape Art](#)[Abstract Painting](#)[Frank Stella](#)